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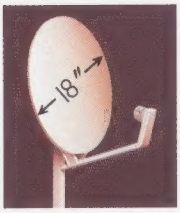

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VIDEO magazine

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The art of squeezing home theater sound and picture into small rooms. Pictured are Atlantic Technology's System 250 surround sound speakers, Sony's KV-27V55 TV, Panasonic's PV-4464 VCR and LX-600 combi player, and Harmon Kardon's AVR20 A/V receiver on a Room Tunes TV stand. Photograph by Les Morsillo

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The Audit Bureau

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CHANNEL ONE

Video bashing in an age of PCs

PC proselytizers seem to be taking bolder swipes than ever at the supposed obsolescence of television sets. We don't mean PC as in politically correct, but PC as in the personal computers they predict will soon satisfy all our needs for entertainment. Just recently, Intel President Andy Grove used his keynote speech at a New York PC exposition to wax poetic about the possibilities for computers. Fair enough, but full-page newspaper ads flogging Grove's comments in the days that followed scorned those who think the info highway "will come through their TV" (even as they found it prudent to offer free copies of the speech on videocassette.)

George Gilder, a Reagan-era supply sider turned techno-pundit, takes an even harsher view in his provocative new book *Telecosm*. According to Gilder: "Computers will soon blow away the broadcast television industry." Video rental and game giants like Blockbuster and Nintendo are "ballast from the past" whose businesses are only good "for the moment." The Grand Alliance, the coalition of companies struggling to establish an HDTV standard, is pursuing a wrong-headed approach that represents a capitulation to "foreign TV interests" and a betrayal of the American computer and newspaper industries (Gilder's big on newspapers).

Computer makers, and their advocates, have a lot to be proud, even smug about. But all this video bashing is more smoke than nicotine. The underlying assumption that television and home video are about to wither under an onslaught of chip-powered muscle machines is bunk. Will stronger, smaller, cheaper computers morph familiar programs into new modes of amusement? Probably. The fallacy is that they will displace televisions.

We've probably said it before, but here it is: New technologies don't usually kill off older technologies, they settle in beside them to create independent markets and industries. People don't stop liking television or renting videos just because they've learned how to swap emoticons. Sure, TVs will acquire deepening layers of silicon, and computers will increase their video friendliness. But the family set—whether it's a tube, a flat panel or a projector; whether it's in a living room, a bedroom or a home thater; whether it's programs come off-air or from a cable, a phone line or a satellite—will outlive us all as the central engine of home entertainment.

Stan Pinkwas

Stan Pinkwas
Editor

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Cable angst, test signals and skydiving

Last best hope

I just finished reading July's "Off the Air" about the things that drive people crazy, and noted the complaints about cable. Common sense says cable companies exist because we subscribe. As long as we complain and send money, they will do what they please. The only way to stop them is to stop subscribing for a month or two. They'll get the message. A disconnect is our only hope.

Brian Nichols
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

What about privacy?

One aspect of the 500-channel future I never hear about is the millions of television sets that will be monitored by central computer systems. They will, in effect, be bugged. Will the information gleaned from the information highway's toll booths be the property of operator companies or available to the public?

James Leatham,
Chester, New York

Just do it

In "Born to be Wild" (May) Darlene Kellner is quoted by Scott Wasser as saying "Skydiving is not an easy sport to learn because you only get, at most, a minute of practice time each jump." Yet, the following paragraph states, "According to Kellner, skydiving is easy for the average person to learn." So before I strap on a parachute and jump out of a perfectly good airplane, I need to know, is the sport easy to learn or not?

David L. Miller,
Naperville, Illinois

How to Jump: The camcorder is optional, the chute is not

Reality bites

Kevin Miller's advice ("Home Theater," June) about setting up your TV for the best picture overlooks the fact that the best setting for test signals may not always produce the best picture with real-world source material. I find that laserdiscs and broadcasts require distinctly different contrast and black level settings. A truly advanced television set would automatically memorize (and restore) your settings for each input and for each channel.

William Sommerwerck,
Bellevue, Washington

The Greenberg cure

I enjoyed the April and May stories about THX and home theater. You ought to give Corey Greenberg a promotion or a raise. His irreverent attitude is an antidote to the standard too-serious-to-be-funny audio reviewer. I also liked your blunt assessments of THX and surround sound processors; they are a counterpoint to what we read in other magazines. The reference to the home theater amplifier that can't clip due to the limitations of current household wiring made me laugh.

William A. Mendoza,
Tallahassee, Florida

For the record

"Call of the Wide" (June) incorrectly attributed two cinema modes to Pioneer's SD-P5071K and SD-P4571K widescreen TVs. While both sets expand 4:3 pictures to fill the screen, neither has the Cinema I and II modes that enlarge letterboxed prints to fill the screen. ■

Video Magazine welcomes your comments. Address queries to Feedback, Video Magazine, 460 West 34 Street, New York, NY 10001.

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FAST FORWARD

Back to the Future: Rod Taylor, Alan Young and the restored Time Machine.

HDTV goes desktop

After nearly a decade's research into HDTV by some the world's largest labs, a tiny company may be about to steal their thunder. The Duck Corp., based in New York City, recently demonstrated what it says is the world's first HDTV picture displayed by a plain, off-the-shelf personal computer. It also demonstrated the first full-motion, broadcast-quality video on a standard PC running Microsoft Windows and Video for Windows.

Both demos looked as impressive as Duck promised. They were conducted with software only and required no special computer hardware, other than a Pentium PC costing less than $2,000. The HDTV demo ran video at about 800 lines of TV resolution in a progressive scan mode. But a spokesman said the resolution could be increased with a more powerful computer. Its image quality was comparable to recent HDTV demonstrations on special equipment costing thousands of dollars more. Duck President Stanley Marder boasted that June 23, the day of Duck's debut, "will go down in the annals of computing history" as the day a computer first bested a TV set in video quality.

The key to Duck's breakthrough is a new compression algorithm called TrueMotion S, written by Duck partners Dan Miller and Victor Yurkovsky over a four-year period. The compression scheme is scalable across major platforms, including DOS, Windows, Sega and 3DO. A Macintosh version is scheduled for release at the end of the year. TrueMotion S, says the company, surpasses the capabilities of MPEG-2 compression and costs less to implement. Its key feature, said Duck, is a unique intraframe non-DCT (discrete cosine transform) algorithm that offers better quality and editable video. Every frame is complete—there are no predicted frames.

Duck also has a new interactive media engine that lets developers create videos with advanced interactivity. Duck demonstrated video images of products that could be turned full circle and examined in close-ups by viewers manipulating a computer mouse. Such technology could be used for anything from interactive shopping to video games. In fact, game giant Sega has said it will incorporate Duck's technologies into future Sega gear, and Crystal Dynamics, another gamemaker, also plans to use Duck compression in its game and multimedia titles.

—Frank Beacham

Why a Duck? High resolution video images on a PC using Duck Corp.'s TrueMotion compression.

ONCE UPON A TIME MACHINE

Time was clearly not on the side of the Time Machine, the legendary film prop used in George Pal's 1960 sci-fi adventure of the same name, based on the H.G. Wells book.

The fantastic invention—a Victorian-era concoction combining a barber's chair, a large revolving disk, a crystal control lever and a toboggan-like base—was sold at auction with other MGM heirlooms for $10,000 in 1970. The buyer put it in the back of a truck and traveled around the country, charging people to see it. A few years later, it mysteriously appeared, in shabby condition, at an Orange County thrift shop. Bob Burns, a makeup man, memorabilia collector and friend of the late Pal, brought it to his Burbank home and, with the help of industry associates, restored the machine to pristine form.

The Time Machine: The Journey Back is a loving, 48-minute tribute to Pal, the prop's reconstruction and the film. It's hosted by *Time Machine* star Rod Taylor who also appears in a new scene with costar Alan Young that's sure to draw goosebumps from *The Time Machine*'s legions of fans.

The Time Machine: The Journey Back is available for $19.95 from 7th Voyage Productions; phone 818-890-0307 for further info. **—Irv Slifkin**

Pal Joey: GI's new interactive cable box

The set-top battle begins

The battlefield in the war for control of the information superhighway will be the top of your TV set. Whoever succeeds in creating and broadly distributing a set-top box that receives digital video and audio signals and sends interactive commands back should enjoy staggering profits and considerable clout.

And the first salvo has just been fired. At the Summer Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago, cable-box and satellite-receiver giant General Instrument unveiled Joey, which GI calls a "set-top modular television concept." Joey—a box the size of a VCR—tunes in cable and broadcast video signals, and sends and receives data through telephone lines and serial ports. It can incorporate a descrambler for pay cable channels, or decompression hardware for receiving compressed digital signals.

If Joey takes off, it could revolutionize the TV business. Because Joey includes a tuner and all the whiz-bang features offered by today's high-end TVs—like picture-in-picture and onscreen menus—all you need is a barebones video monitor. (TV manufacturers we spoke to at CES were predictably cynical about Joey, citing their own failed attempts to market component TV back in the '80s.) One hurdle for consumers will be the projected cost. That's right, the consumer—not the cable company—will have to shell out the bucks for this box.

GI's idea is that Joey's flexibility will allow the box to be quickly reconfigured to accommodate any programming services the consumer wants, thus saving the expense and hassle of swapping out cable boxes, switching between multiple set-top boxes, and buying a new TV just to get the latest features. Will it work? We'll find out if and when GI actually markets Joey.

—Brent Butterworth

Highway fever

Video's lanes on the information highway keep widening. Here are three projects that have been launched just since last month's feature on the subject, "Hope, Hype and Reality."

- AT&T and Silicon Graphics will jointly develop products to deliver interactive TV services to homes. Allied as Interactive Digital Solutions, the companies hope to make it easier for phone, cable and other networked systems to offer movies-on-demand, shopping services and videograms.
- AT&T will also soon begin offering video services to companies that run toll-free 800 numbers. Since consumers who wish to see pictures of products they want to order will need their own slow-speed digital phone lines, businesses will be the first to employ the service.
- American Telecasting, the country's largest wireless cable TV company, Zenith Electronics and a quartet of other wireless cable companies have joined forces in the race to build digital video networks. A key goal of the new Wireless Cable Digital Alliance is to develop technology that will let consumers receive up to 300 channels of video on wireless devices, like handheld cellular receivers.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Our children should at least have a tricycle on the information superhighway... Television must put forward role models our children can respect."

—REED HUNDT, FCC chairman, at hearing about the quality of children's programs

TIMESHIFT

TEN YEARS AGO IN VIDEO MAGAZINE

"In Chicago, McCormick exhibition hall exuded conspicuous consumption. Yes, we're talking digital dynamics. Overheard on day one: 'We just don't get involved with analog'...Videocassette recorders are selling in Moscow electronics stores, according to West German tourists. We're not sure what format it is, but it's Russian built and has the trademark Electronika WM 12. The VCR sells for about 4,200 rubles, approximately seven months wages for the average Soviet citizen...Panasonic reportedly has been quietly developing a large flat-screen TV (LSFT, you heard it here first) in its research laboratory. The screen of a working prototype is said to measure 10 feet across (diagonally)... Michael Jackson goes Japanese, at least on the Thriller tape. The tape has sold 750,000 copies worldwide....Fisher prepares itself for the oncoming age of stereo broadcast television with two new TVs that are genuinely stereo-ready, with the broadcast stereo decoder built in...Pioneer may offer its Laser Video Jukebox as early as this month. The most unusual feature is the Karaoke option, a favorite with the Japanese. ■

SEPTEMBER 1984

WHY BUY HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPEAKERS?

"Great loudspeakers make great systems come alive. The loudspeaker is the only component that actually produces the sound we hear. Given the quality of digital sources and available amplification, increasing the loudspeaker budget nearly always provides the most demonstrably audible improvement."

Chris Browder, B&W Loudspeakers, President of AAHEA

"High performance loudspeakers reveal so much more of the soundtrack's detail, dynamics, and impact that the listening experience becomes much more lifelike, involving, and enjoyable. It's like bringing the performers into your home."

Jim Thiel, THIEL

"In their pursuit of perfection, dedicated audio manufacturers have developed high-fidelity loudspeakers with performance capabilities far beyond movie theater standards. We believe that the accuracy and realism of these speakers can significantly improve A/V systems. Speakers that realistically reproduce an orchestra and a singer will also realistically reproduce film effects and dialog."

Richard Vandersteen, Vandersteen Audio, Inc.

THE ACADEMY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF HIGH END AUDIO

AAHEA

This column is presented by The Academy for the Advancement of High End Audio (AAHEA), an organization dedicated to the recognition of excellence and the promotion of greater awareness of high end audio.

CONTACT AAHEA AT
TEL: 207-929-5505• FAX: 207-929-5506

Late Breaking News

HOLLYWOOD's most requested video release has finally been given the green light, 63 years after its premier: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* will make its historic debut on videocassette and laserdisc on October 28.

Disney's first feature cartoon, which has had nine big-screen releases seen by six generations, and has recently been fully restored, will come out in both standard and limited-edition collector's sets. The latter will add a documentary on the making of the film, an illustrated book and 10 lithographs of original theatrical posters. Standard editions will be priced at $26.99 for VHS and $29.99 for CAV laserdiscs; collector's editions at $79.99 for VHS and $99.99 for CAV laserdiscs.

Seventh Heaven: *Snow White* is finally out on tape and disc.

•

GoldStar appears poised to join Panasonic in marketing 3DO machines. The company showed a prototype at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago, and says it plans to introduce the player in the U.S. this year. Sanyo also showed its prototype, but has not announced any marketing plans. But don't expect the increase in 3DO manufacturers to bring new capabilities to the system. A 3DO representative told us that all 3DO machines will be functionally identical—only the styling and prices will differ.

•

CES also saw the exhibit of two new ways to watch CD-based interactive software. First, Philips showed a prototype of a combination CD-I player and 20-inch TV set. It plans to sell the unit in Europe this year, and may bring it to the U.S. next year.

Second, Digital Interactive Systems showed a CD-ROM player with an integral sound board and a VGA-to-NTSC convertor. The company says it will play PC-compatible CD-ROMs, audio CDs, Photo CDs and Video CDs on any standard TV set. The device is essentially a TV-top computer—inside are a 486 processor with four megabytes of RAM and a 200-MB hard drive. The company plans to ship the product by late summer this year, for $1,600.

•

HDTV VCRs are now available in the U.S. But unless you just *have* to be the first on your block to have one, don't run for your checkbook—you probably won't find much use for the VCRs, because they're designed to record and play the MUSE analog HDTV signals now being broadcast in Japan. The decks use JVC's W-VHS format, an HDTV version of S-VHS. They're being sold by Captain of America, a New York-based HDTV production company, for $10,000 each.

Right now, there are not many uses for an HDTV VCR in the U.S. Since HDTV broadcasts, laserdiscs and camcorders are not yet available here, buyers of W-VHS machines probably won't be able to do much HDTV recording for a while. And of course, you can't watch an HDTV picture on a normal set—you need at least a data-grade video monitor. However, the decks also record NTSC programs and play VHS and S-VHS tapes. Captain says it will sell prerecorded W-VHS cassettes at $50 and up.

•

Bell Atlantic has become the first phone company to win a green-light from Washington for the right to offer cable TV. Over fierce cable industry opposition, the Federal Communications Commision approved a Bell plan to wire 38,000 homes in Toms River, New Jersey for interactive TV services. Bell says it will offer up to 80 channels at prices significantly less than comparable cable charges. Dozens of other TV projects by phone companies are still pending before the FCC. ■

-**VIDEO MAGAZINE,** January, 1994

"Deep bass without the aid of big, expensive amplifiers. Sounds panned from side to side as smoothly as their corresponding images flew across the screen."

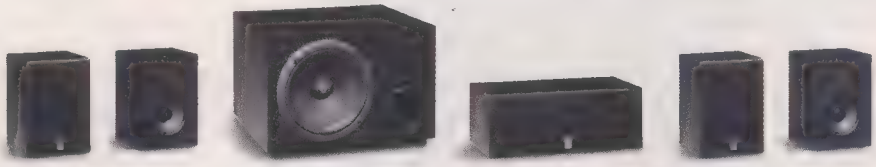
-**SOUND&IMAGE,** Summer, 1993

"We quickly discovered what a difference the right sound system can make! The subwoofers added tremendous excitement to the movie watching experience."

-**POPULAR ELECTRONICS,** January, 1993*

"Cerwin-Vega produces a powerful and taut sound. The impact can be especially felt in the midrange, which will pound you with rotor blade sweeps from Apocalypse Now."

-**SATELLITE ORBIT,** June, 1993



DESIGN & ENGINEERING HONORS
INNOVATIONS 93
CONSUMER ELECTRONICS SHOW

CERWIN-VEGA **SENSURROUND!**® HOME THEATER

Turn it up.®

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Circle 6 on Reader Service Card.

IMAGINE HOW EASY A CAMCORDER WOULD BE IF IT WASN'T STUCK TO YOUR FACE.

WAYNE AND
TY GRETZKY

SHARP VIEWCAM™

Imagine a camcorder so innovative it has a big color LCD view screen, instead of a tiny black and white viewfinder. Imagine a lens that pivots 270°, instead of being locked in one place. Imagine a camcorder that you hold comfortably away from your face, so you have the freedom to shoot and still be part of the action.

CAPTURES MOMENTS EASILY.

You'd be able to do things you've never been able to with a camcorder before. You'd be able to shoot easier–from any position, any angle–even turn the view screen and put yourself in the picture. And you'd be able to get those shots you'd probably miss if you were squinting through a tiny viewfinder.

THE VIEW SCREEN KEEPS YOU IN THE ACTION.

The Sharp Viewcam™ is the first camcorder to let you to do all this and more.

Then, with the view screen and the built-in speaker, you can instantly play back everything you've just shot. No matter where you are. All the color, all the detail, and all the sound.

270° PIVOTING LENS LETS YOU SHOOT HIGH AND LOW.

What's more, no other line of camcorders combines such an incredible view screen with advanced features like digital image stabilization, snapshot and strobe effects, Hi-Fi stereo and more. Plus only the Sharp Viewcam has an optional TV tuner to turn it into a personal, go anywhere TV and VCR.

PLAY BACK ALL THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS INSTANTLY.

The Sharp Viewcam. It's the new movement in camcorders. Call now, for a free brochure and the name of your nearest Sharp dealer.

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LCD

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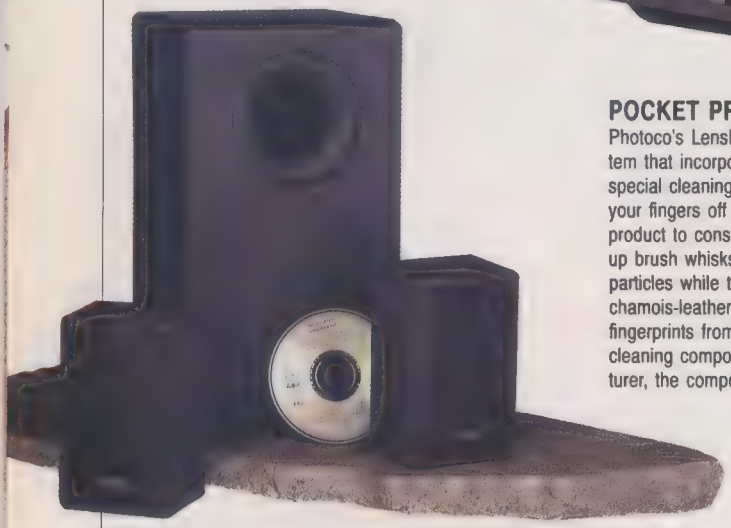
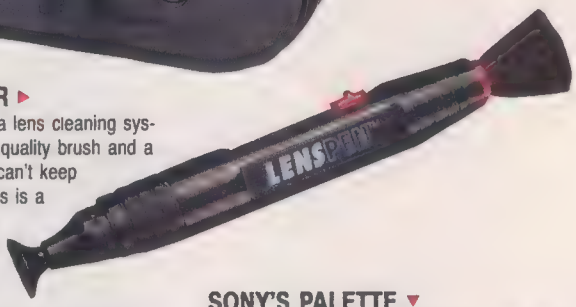
Circle 7 on Reader Service Card.

Big LCD, tiny speakers, flatter tubes

VIDEO ANSWERING MACHINE ▸

JVC's GR-SV3 Systemax Entertainment System ($1,099) brings the concept of an LCD viewing screen to VHS-C. The three-inch color viewfinder can be left in place or raised to an upright position on top of the camcorder body. You can also use the LCD to leave video messages, indicated by a status light, that can be retrieved in the manner of an answering machine. The SV3 features a 3x zoom lens, Instant Reshoot and QwikPix, which lets you automatically shoot takes no longer than five seconds each. A clip-on TV tuner is available as an option. (For additional information info, circle 110 on your Reader Service Card.)





POCKET PROTECTOR ▸

Photoco's LensPen ($10) is a lens cleaning system that incorporates a high-quality brush and a special cleaning pad. If you can't keep your fingers off your lens, this is a product to consider. A twist-up brush whisks away loose particles while the flexible, chamois-leather pad cleans fingerprints from the lens. The cap contains a cleaning compound. According to the manufacturer, the compound also reduces dust-attracting electrostatic charges on the lens. (For additional info, circle 109 on the Reader Service Card)

SONY'S PALETTE ▾

Sony's new KV-32XBR96S Trinitron ($2,599) is a 32-inch model featuring a dark-tint screen, a Digital Intelligent Color Pure Filter to minimize distortion, and Program Palette presets that control different categories of programs, like movies, sports, music, news and games. You can also divvy up viewing time with dual-tuner picture-in-picture—it allows you to watch an additional show without using an external tuner or VCR. Another feature adjusts picture levels for ambient room lighting. (For additional info, circle 104 on the Reader Service Card)

KLOSS ACT ▲

The New Ensemble III by Cambridge SoundWorks ($329) is a less costly Ensemble subwoofer-satellite speaker system designed by Henry Kloss. It is an ultra-compact system consisting of a pair of 1/2-inch two-way satellite speakers (measuring 4-1/2 by 6-1/2 inches) and a small subwoofer. At this price Cambridge says there is but a small sacrifice in power handling, efficiency and deep bass reach and that it is a genuine two-way design. Hook-up wire and wire-cutters are thrown in free of charge. (For additional info, circle 102 on the Reader Service Card)

BRIGHT IDEA ▲

Hitachi's new VT-F482 ($449) is a four-head, hi-fi VCR that has VCR Plus and an illuminated remote, which may make it a desirable addition for late-night TV junkies. A remote jog/shuttle system can move the tape fast, slow or frame by frame. It also includes instructional menus in English, French and Spanish. Audio/video dubbing, a synchro-edit jack and audio level meters complete the package. (For additional info, circle 103 on the Reader Service Card)

Panasonic introduces the WJ-AVE7 Digital Video Mixer. With Luminance Keying and over 100 special effects, it makes your videos especially effective.

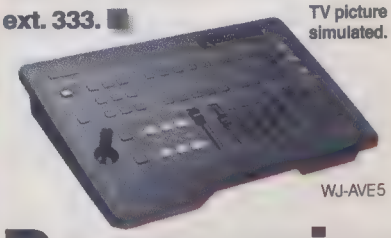
Think of the new Panasonic WJ-AVE7 Video Mixer as a way to turbo-charge your imagination.

Dual PIP

Its sophisticated technology lets you do almost anything you can imagine at a price that's so affordable it's unimaginable. For instance, its Luminance Keying feature lets you alter reality by superimposing video images. Its auto take feature creates flawless transitions, automatically. Add dual picture-in-picture, a color corrector, over 100 digital effects, a built-in audio mixing board and the optional video titler, WJ-TTL7, and this Panasonic Video Mixer lets you do almost anything you can conceive. And unlike other systems, the WJ-AVE7's digital synchronizer lets you dissolve or wipe between any 2 NTSC signals.

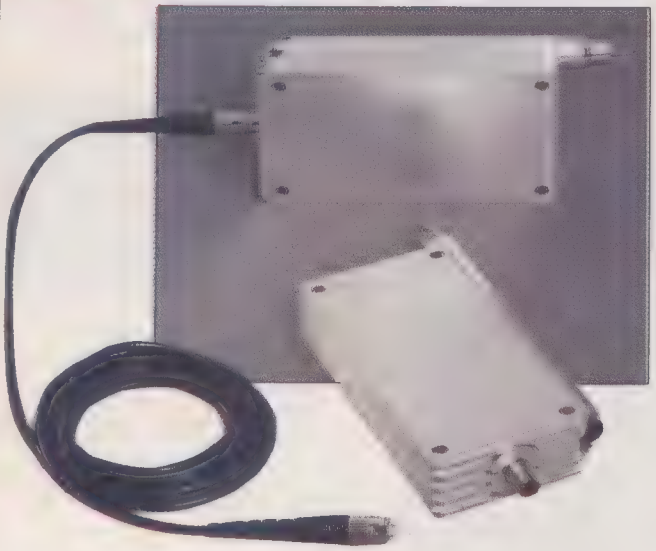
And our AV Mixer can do even more—to find out how much more, speak to your nearest Panasonic Dealer, at **1-800-365-1515, ext. 333.**

TV picture simulated.


WJ-AVE5

Panasonic®
just slightly ahead of our time.®

NEW PRODUCTS

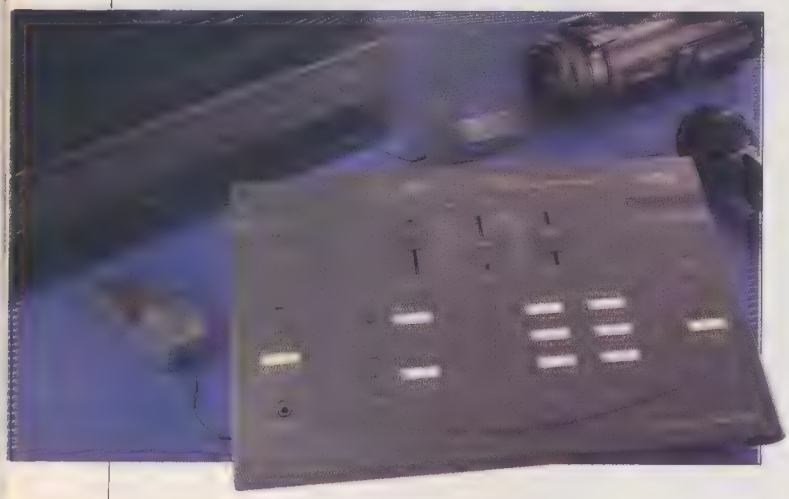


◄ SPEED OF LIGHT

The Mongoose Analog Optical Transmitter and Receiver for video ($369), with Cobra Fiber Optic Cable ($62.50 first meter, $5 each additional meter) is the first fiber optic cable system for conventional home A/V equipment. Using durable jacketting, the fiber optic eliminates the noise, interference and attenuation associated with wire cable. According to Mongoose, it eliminates the need for digital conversions, which introduce jitter and information loss. The transmitter plugs into components like CD players, VCRs and tape decks and converts their output to an optical signal. A receiver converts the signal back to an electrical impulse. (For additional info, circle 100 on the Reader Service Card)

COMMANDING VIEW ▼

Sima's Infrared Editor and Audio Mixer ($279) is intended to simplify home editing. By adding infrared sensors to functions controlling editing and source VCRs, it eliminates the need to control the decks manually. It also features two-touch editing—touch it once and it lines the decks up, twice and it completes the edit. A built-in stereo audio mixer lets you add music and a microphone allows narration. (For additional info, circle 106 on the Reader Service Card)



◄ ADD SOME MUSCLE

The B.I.C. V-12 powered subwoofer ($699) incorporates a high-performance 12-inch long-throw woofer in a vented enclosure, and comes with a companion amplifier. It is designed for home theater enthusiasts. Rated at 100 watts, it can be hooked up to the outputs of any surround sound receiver. You can buy the amplifier separately ($399), and add some power to an existing system. (For additional info, circle 105 on the Reader Service Card)

PERFECTLY FLAT ▼

Toshiba's CX35D70 ($2,799) 35-inch TV offers four-channel Digital Sound Processing, Dolby surround Sound and a built-in Cyclone ABX sound system that Toshiba says enhances bass performance. A Color Temperature Selection control allows you to select the overall "warmth" of the image. Toshiba also says that the new FST Perfect picture tube gives the CX35D90 the flattest color picture tube in the industry and allows wider viewing angles and less distortion. (For additional info, circle 107 on the Reader Service Card)

◄ DRY EYE

Sharp's Sports Pack ($419) provides outdoor protection for your ViewCam. It can be used in all types of conditions, winter or summer, and is water resistant. Controls on the outside of the Pack operate the ViewCam, and a window provides a clear view of the LCD screen. (For additional info, circle 108 on the Reader Service Card)

JVC TAKES TELEVISION TO THE MOVIES

Introducing JVC Widescreen TV.

Sit back, relax and enjoy the show. Whatever the source – from regular TV to letterbox laserdiscs – JVC's NV-55BX4 makes it look like, sound like, feel like you're at the movies. How? With a huge 55" 16:9 format super widescreen that shows movies the way they were meant to be seen; three widescreen display modes including JVC's exclusive Panorama mode that lets even regular TV broadcasts fill the widescreen; Theater Status function that turns overly bright video into lush, soft, film-like pictures; and a Dolby® Pro Logic® sound system that thunders across the room and whispers in your ear. No other big screen, no other widescreen, no other television can do what the JVC NV-55BX4 can. It's not just television anymore. It's television that takes you to the movies.

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BY BRENT BUTTERWORTH

Atlantic Technology's 250 system—home theater speakers for movies & music

These may be the golden days of home theater. Check out any online consumer electronics forum, and you'll see arguments about dipole surrounds vs. direct-radiating types, bass in the surround channel, the upcoming digital surround format (or *formats*), and dozens of other topics.

One day, we may have solid answers for many of these questions, and home theater won't be nearly as much fun to talk about. For now, though, inventive manufacturers are coming up with their own approaches to home theater sound—approaches that may not be exactly "by the book," but that solve the problems of more conventional systems.

Acoustic Bubble: The 250 system—a subwoofer (center), a center speaker (lower left), two square surround speakers and two main speakers.

One such manufacturer is Atlantic Technology, which was one of the first to introduce a dedicated home theater sound system, back in 1990. With all of its systems, Atlantic has attempted to address complaints that movie sound systems can't sound good for music, and vice versa. The company's 150 system ("Shootout in Surround," Mar. '93) definitely sounds great for both movies and music, but at only $899 list, it had little serious competition. The new 250 system lists for about $1,450—a price range in which we've found plenty of attractive options, including speakers from Cambridge SoundWorks, NHT, Cerwin-Vega and others.

Can Atlantic Technology meet the competitive challenges of a higher price bracket? To cut a long story short: Yeah. But the 250 system differs so much from its competitors that you need a thorough technical explanation to appreciate its advantages.

The most unusual aspect of the 250 system is its $279 253C center speaker, which has its own set of tone controls. These let you tailor the response of the center speaker to compare *or contrast* with the main speakers. That's right—contrast. Atlantic recommends rolling off the highs in the center speaker for two reasons: to counter the X-curve equalization (treble boost) used in many movie soundtracks and to expand the soundfield. Reducing the highs in the center draws the listener's attention toward the sides slightly, for a bigger, more room-filling sound.

This directly counters the home theater maxim that the front three speakers should match. And yes, pans across the front three Atlantic speakers don't sound as smooth as they would with a matched system. But I think the benefits—more natural-sounding dialog, and a more theater-like sound—are well worth the compromise. (You can also buy the 253C separately and use the controls to approximately match your existing speakers.)

Rolling off the highs in the center accomplishes much of what THX-certified surround decoders do with their re-equalization circuits. But leaving, as Atlantic does, all the highs in the 251LR front left and right speakers preserves more of the detail in ambient sounds and soundtrack music than the video-oriented speakers I've tried, which tend to have recessed highs.

Atlantic's $299/pair 254SR surround speakers borrow one of the best parts of THX—the dipolar design that creates a diffuse, realistic soundfield. The 254SR design uses one driver for low frequencies, and two mid/high-frequency drivers, which are wired out of phase.

The 254SR speakers can be mounted on Atlantic's $99/pair stands, but we liked them best when mounted five or six feet high on the wall. You can even mount them *in* the wall, so that only the grilles stick out. Like the stands and the 251LR speakers, they're also available in white.

The $569 252PBM powered subwoofer ranks with Energy's $550 AS90 and NHT's $600 SW2P as one of my favorite affordable subs. I didn't find it as punchy as the AS90, but I found its somewhat fuller sound better suited to much of the program material I tried. It can be used in powered or passive modes. In the powered mode, the sub gets all the juice from the integral 90-watt amp, and you power the satellites with a receiver or another amp. In the passive mode, 40 watts goes to the sub and 40 more to each 251LR, and you can take advantage of the front-mounted bass and treble contols.

The 252PBM has low-pass crossover points at 80 and 120 Hertz, but use 80—120 is lame because it makes the sub easier to locate, and usually makes the bass tubbier. There's no high-pass crossover for the satellites—they get a full-range signal. I've found this scheme usually helps sats blend better with subs. The drawback is that the satellites can't handle as much power as if you high-passed them, but that's no problem here—the

continued on page 112

LES MORSILLO

Nice Rear.

CD, Tuner, 2 Audio Tape Loops, 2 VCR Tape Loops, Laser Disc, Video Inputs, Sub woofer crossover, 6 Channels of output with individual adjustment. What a rear! Take a look at the rest...

AMC Home Entertainment Center

Designed from the REAR to the front, our product team considered every simple and complex hook up needed for a serious Dolby Pro Logic pre-amplifier. Actually we designed it for ourselves, the most critical component necessary to put together a great Home Theater. Then we designed a remote control so simple that even your parents could use it. We took a look at those super theater systems and built in some of the same professional features like Sound Pressure Level (SPL) matching.

We added specifically-designed amplifiers and a powered sub woofer small yet powerful enough to rattle your windows. Together these components are called System 2. We think our 25 years of passion and experience paid off.

Here are a few serious design reasons why our System 2 should be your Home Theater choice..

1. System Building Flexibility so unusual it guarantees your long term entertainment needs are met no matter how many components you buy.

2. Exceptional Audiophile Circuits offering high resolution (clear sound) with a dynamic range of greater than 115 dB (Enough to play the 1812 Overture loud).

3. Dolby Time Link Technology recently patented plus newly developed micro processors for steering sound effects to your speakers.

4. Dynamic Range Greater Than 100dB in Pro Logic combined with our Dolby circuits super low distortion (listen to the center channel speaker) the dynamics are immediately felt.

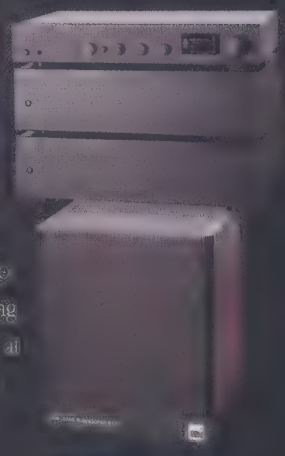
5. Distributed Power using two audiophile quality amplifiers delivering 270 watts across your three front speakers with 45 watts for each surround speakers.

6. Low Distortion Bass delivered by our powered sub woofer using our unique Negative Output Impedance Amplifier circuit produces clean bass response down to 30Hz @ 102 dB.

7. Matching Sound Pressure Level Exactly for all six speakers is practically automatic using our external microphone and built-in SPL meter.

There's so much more to cover, why not go down to your nearest AMC Dealer and bring your favorite movie or give us a call direct at 1-800-324-6396. Find out for yourself what our System 2 is all about and

...check out our rear.



System 2

DOLBY SURROUND

AMC™

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Circle 8 on Reader Service Card.

BY COREY GREENBERG

Balancing Act: Using an SPL meter to set surround levels.

If you've got a full surround-sound speaker array—left, center and right channel speakers up front, and a pair of surrounds to the sides of the listening couch—you need to make sure all the speakers are *exactly* balanced in level to each other. If your speaker levels aren't calibrated for this, every movie soundtrack you hear will have its perspective distorted—and you won't be able to hear all the care that went into creating the delicate balance of music, effects and dialog.

Your surround receiver's or processor's instruction manual probably said you could set these levels by ear. WRONG! That gets you into the ballpark, but you're still sitting with the bleacher bums. Instead, go to Radio Shack and buy its $32 sound-pressure level meter (catalog number 33-2050). Every surround receiver/processor with Dolby Pro-Logic capability has an internal test tone generator which sends a few seconds of pink noise through each of your system's speakers, one at a time. The Radio Shack meter will tell you which speakers need to be turned up and which need to be turned down until they all play the pink noise at *exactly* the same level.

Radio Shack also has a digital-readout version of the SPL meter for 30 clams more that's chock full o' cool features like peak hold. But us civilians don't need that, and most pros I know actually prefer the original model with the wigglin' needle because it's easier to read at a distance than the squinty little LCD display. And if you have to adjust your processor's levels at the processor itself while the meter sits across the room at the listening seat, this'll make all the difference in the world.

Here's how to calibrate your speaker levels. Start the test tone sequence and go back to your couch (or wherever you normally sit when you watch movies). It helps if you're sitting dead center between the left and right speakers. Set the Radio Shack meter's range to the 80-decibel position, the weighting switch to C, and the response to slow.

While holding the meter steady at arm's length in front of you with the microphone pointed straight up toward the ceiling, adjust your system's master volume so that when the pink noise is coming from either the right or left channels, the meter's needle registers 0 dB. The pink noise should be going from speaker to speaker—first the left, then center, then right, then both surrounds, then back to the left, etc., staying with each position long enough for you to get a reading of each speaker's individual level and adjust it up or down.

Most processors allow these level adjustments to be performed from the remote. The ones that don't require either a friend to help you or some kind of stand for the meter so you can adjust the levels over at the processor. When the pink noise moves to the center and surround speakers, adjust their levels up or down until the meter stays on 0 dB, no matter which speaker the noise is coming from. And that's it—once all the speakers play at 0 dB on the pink noise, they're all precisely matched in level to each other.

Level Best: Radio Shack's sound-pressure level meter.

If you're running a subwoofer in your home theater, it needs to be balanced to the rest of the speakers as well. In this case, forget about using an SPL meter. Listening rooms cause so many frequency response lumps in the bass range that measuring the sub's level at one frequency—or even at several points along its range—can often give subjectively bass-heavy or bass-shy sound if you try to set the sub with the meter to exactly the same readout as the other speakers. Try listening to voices—Connie Chung is my personal fave, and it's got nothing to do with daydreams involving sexy lingerie and feather dusters—and turn the sub's level up to the point where the voice sounds too bassy. Back off just until the voice sounds natural, and your sub's level should be right on.

Once you calibrate your speakers' levels, it's a good idea to turn the system's volume down to the normal level you'd listen at and measure the speaker levels again. You'll probably have to set the SPL meter's range knob to a lower setting when you do this. If your speakers are still matched in level, cool man cool. But some surround processors and receivers don't have very good tracking between the channels as you raise and lower the master volume, so if your system goes out of whack when you lower the volume, you should calibrate it at the level you're most likely to use instead of the arbitrary 80 dB reference level discussed earlier.

There *is* a "correct" level for home theater sound. It's called Dolby reference level. Some processors, including all THX-certified models, have internal test tones set so that the SPL meter should read 75 dB. If you're not sure what your receiver/processor's test tone levels are, you can use the -20 dB test tone from a test CD, and calibrate your system to 85 dB. If you don't have a test CD, calibrate your system so that the loudest sounds in an action movie hit about 105 dB. Although these methods give you the same levels used in movie sound mixing, you may find the level too loud for your taste. Trust your ears—here, the "right" level is the one that lets you enjoy your system the most.

Once you correctly calibrate your home theater's speaker levels, the soundfield should snap into focus, allowing you to hear the dialog, music and surround effects without difficulty. The finest Steinway will sound like a toy piano unless it's tuned properly, and so will your home theater, so calibrate your speaker levels and get the best sound your system can deliver. ■

LES MORSILLO

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Circle 9 on Reader Service Card.

BY TIMOTHY LIEBE

Cutting class: The basics of video editing

Basic editing, whether it's for videotape, film, audio or even articles and books, does more than just cut out the "bad parts" from your material. It also shapes material so it flows smoothly, and tells a story to the audience in a clear, entertaining fashion. By applying a few simple rules, you can make your videotapes a pleasure to watch.

While edit controllers, video mixers and titlers help make your finished production look more professional, they're not necessary if all you need to do is a simple edit. If you have a camcorder, a VCR with a flying erase head and a TV set, and if you know how to set up for basic dubbing (your camcorder manual has instructions), you have everything you need for basic video editing.

PREPARATION

Before you start to edit, view all the footage you intend to use in your final production. Jot down on a piece of paper the tape counter number where each shot on the tape begins, and where there are any problems or places where something important happens within the shot. This list is known as a footage log.

Using your footage log as a reference, write on a second sheet of paper what shots you want to keep, in what order you want them to appear, roughly how long you'd like them to run, and where you want the next shot to begin. This is known as a paper cut. Paper cuts will be very useful once you actually sit down to edit your tape, They serve as a written reminder of how you want to tell the story.

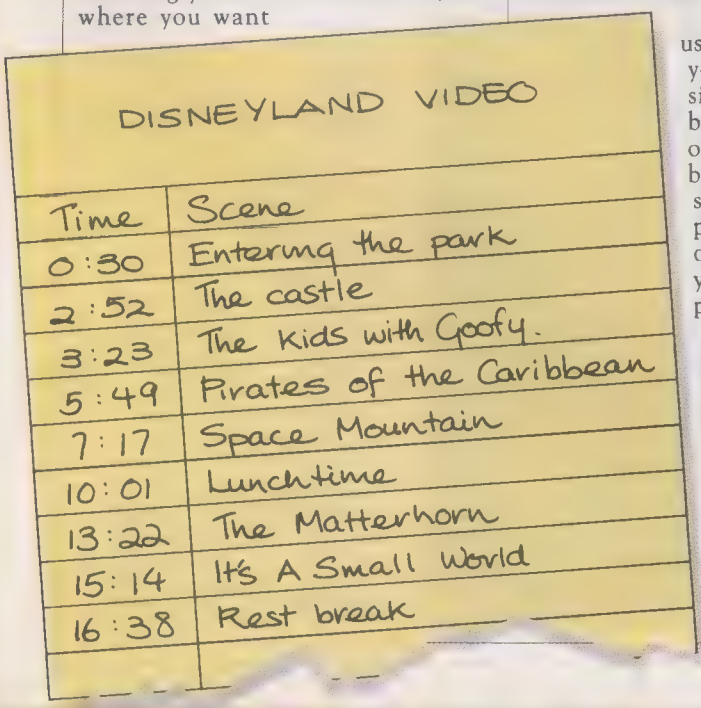
EDITING TERMS

In the editing process, the VCR or camcorder that has the tape of raw footage (the "camera original") you want to edit is called the source deck, while the VCR that contains the tape you're editing to (the "edited master") is called the record deck. The point on your edited master where you end one shot and start another is called an edit point.

All videotape formats contain a signal called the control track, which must remain unbroken for your tape to generate a clean, stable video signal. Glitches, like color shifts or scrambled signals at the edit points, are often the result of the control track being interrupted in some way. (In 8mm and Hi8, the control track is part of the video track, and is much more difficult to damage.)

To minimize glitches, professional editing equipment generally rewinds both the camera original and the edited master for five seconds prior to an edit point, then plays both tapes forward to give them a sort of running start called a preroll. Some consumer editing equipment can do the same thing.

Even if you're not using an edit controller, you can do something similar to a preroll by backing your camera original up 10 seconds behind the start of the shot you want, then playing it for seven seconds before you take your record deck out of pause. Your edited master, meanwhile, should be paused about three seconds before where you want the next shot to start, since it generally takes that amount of time for your record deck to grab on to the signal once you take it out of pause. Three seconds is just an estimate, though – with some decks, it may be only one or two. You'll have to try it on your deck and see.



DISNEYLAND VIDEO

Time	Scene
0:30	Entering the park
2:52	The castle
3:23	The Kids with Goofy.
5:49	Pirates of the Caribbean
7:17	Space Mountain
10:01	Lunchtime
13:22	The Matterhorn
15:14	It's A Small World
16:38	Rest break

Makin' a List: A footage log.

COMMON PROBLEMS

As you edit your videotape, keep an eye out for the following problems:

- *Snow in mid-tape:* This is the result of trying to cut a new scene in on the very last frame of an old one, or trying to insert a scene in the middle of existing footage without using insert edit. Both will interrupt the control track. The tape suddenly switches to snow for a few seconds, then reluctantly returns to the action. You can avoid this by prerolling.
- *Shots starting in the middle of the action:* This happens when your camera original starts up too late for the record deck to grab all the footage you want. Again, prerolling your tapes will correct the problem.
- *Tape stretching glitches:* A common cause of glitches at your edit points is the edited master being stretched because it's been in pause too long. Most VCRs circumvent this problem – which usually appears as flagging at the top of the picture – by automatically shutting off after a few minutes in pause. But you shouldn't rely on that alone. If it's going to take you more than a minute or two to find the next shot, stop your editing VCR.
- *Jump cuts:* These usually occur when there's footage in the middle of a shot that you want to cut out, but you want to keep the material on either end. Simply cutting out the offending material, especially if you didn't change the camera angle significantly after the mistake happened, causes a "jump" in the action, which is jarring to the viewer.

To avoid jump cuts, find material that relates to what's being seen in your footage (like a shot from another angle, or a reaction from someone else to what's going on) that you can add to cover the cut. These cover shots are called cutaways, and they're frequently used in movies.

"NOT THE TELLER, THE TALE"

A good editing job should simply "tell the story," and not call attention to itself. I don't mean to denigrate the rap-

continued on page 92

Is This Your Home Theater System?

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VIDEO ADVERTISER Q&A

Paul Ginther, President of The Ginther Group, discusses video accessories for 3M Black Watch.

Q Why is it important to clean your VCR's video heads?

A Like most items that we take for granted, we don't react until we have a problem. This is especially true of VCRs. Video head contamination is insidious. Debris builds up slowly and ultimately both the audio and video signals are no longer tolerable. This can be avoided with periodic head cleaning.

Q What is the best way to clean video heads?

A The best way is to have a qualified technician do a thorough cleaning. When that's not possible, we suggest that you use a "magnetic based" video cleaning system. All 3M Black Watch head cleaners work on the principle of super impregnating a high intensity, aqueous head cleaning agent on a magnetic medium similar to videotape. It's simple to use, safe, fast, and won't damage your equipment. Most hardware manufacturers that make a recommendation on user head cleaning recommend magnetic-based head cleaners.

Q What separates high-end videotapes from standard-grade ones?

A You get what you pay for holds true for most videotape. In a day when retailers are selling T-120s for less than $2, you know that you're not getting the same high-quality tape that was around just a few years ago. Most manufacturers have cut costs. To cut costs, most have cut quality. Not 3M. Black Watch products are quality controlled at the highest quality level assurance that 3M has to offer. The consumer should look for the process that the manufacturer uses to assure quality. Test your current brand of choice with others. Always buy the best tape your pocketbook can handle when you want to archive a tape.

Q&A

BY RODERICK WOODCOCK

Flying erase heads, insert edits, laserdiscs

Q Is it possible to retrofit a VCR with a flying erase head?

Paul Wilkinson,
Washington, D.C.

A No, it's not. Given the similarities in mounting hardware within a specific format, you certainly could add a new video head assembly that contained a flying erase head. But what would you connect it to? It's not just the flying erase head that provides the seamless, noise-free edits between scenes. Supporting circuits would also have to be added to control signal timing, tape backspacing and (on most VHS camcorders and VCRs) synchronization with the full-erase head. Full-erase heads aren't found on any 8mm products made after about 1986. These rely entirely on the flying erase head for tape erasure, as do a few newer VHS-C camcorders.

When you consider the difficulties, the task becomes so daunting, even for an experienced technician, that the idea of retrofitting becomes vastly impractical. Buying a new VCR or camcorder already equipped with a flying erase head is more cost-effective in the long run.

Q I have two JVC HR-6700 VCRs. When I perform insert edits, the normal audio track remains untouched, but the hi-fi track is interrupted. Since I do music videos, is there any way I can add something to my system that would allow me to keep my hi-fi track during insert editing? Can the Panasonic AG-1970 VCR keep its hi-fi track during insert editing?

Demetrius S. Butler,
Woodbridge, Virginia

A VHS video and hi-fi audio signals are both recorded using rotating video heads. The audio gets recorded first, followed by the video, which overlays this "depth audio" layer. The monaural audio track (which can be in stereo on most professional and industrial VHS decks, as well as on a few older consumer VHS models) is recorded in a longitudinal stripe along the top edge of the tape. Only this linear audio signal can be overdubbed on the original tape without disturbing either the hi-fi audio track or the picture. But since the video and hi-fi audio comprise a sort of electronic sandwich, you can't replace the hi-fi audio without also affecting the video.

The easiest way to do what you want is by making a dub of the original tape, mixing the master audio (be it linear or hi-fi) into one signal and re-recording it as a hi-fi signal onto this second-generation tape. Obviously, you'll lose a video generation by doing so, but the resulting tape will still contain a linear audio track of the same mixed signal. This can still be overdubbed if you wish (possibly adding narration), but the new hi-fi audio becomes embedded once again.

The only variation on this process came from JVC, which once offered the ability to record a hi-fi audio signal before adding the video, which was then recorded on top of the audio in a second pass. This feature is in its discontinued HR-S10000 VCR. But the feature had a dubious utility, since the usual practice is to sync new audio to existing video, not the reverse.

Q A friend told me to get rid of my laserdisc player because it is going to be discontinued. Is this true?

Antonio Patino,
Mexico City, Mexico

A If he was referring to laserdisc as a video format, your friend is seriously misinformed. While laserdiscs don't enjoy the broad popularity of VHS tape as a movie medium, it has a following of often zealous laserphiles who support it with disc purchases, not simply rentals. Laserdisc is a minority format, but those who have seen the (laser) light recognize that it's currently the only viable medium for serious movie buffs, since it delivers better audio and video than tape.

Perhaps your friend was just suggesting that your particular laserdisc player might be discontinued. That's certainly possible, since new models come out all the time, often at prices comparable to VCRs. More people might embrace the format, if dealers would give them the chance to fairly evaluate it. Unfortunately, it's rarely demonstrated to the best advantage at the bigger stores or chains, which emphasize VCRs. ■

COLLECTOR'S CLEARINGHOUSE

Searching for Lucy, Lucia and Le Carre,

I'm sure there must be some Le Carre fans out there who taped the BBC versions of the three Smiley spy stories starring Alec Guiness that played on PBS during the mid-'80s: *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, *The Honorable Schoolboy* and *Smiley's People*. Also, one of my favorite guilty pleasures of the '70s is the movie *Candy*, written by Terry Southern. It starred, among others, Ringo Starr and Marlon Brando and has never been released on video although it sometimes appears on late night TV. I would be happy to reimburse all expenses for good VHS copies. John Mistretta DDS2135
McLendon Avenue
Atlanta GA 30307

I'll cover expenses for a good quality VHS or Beta tape of any of the following 1950s movies (Cameron Mitchell is in each): *All Mine to Give* (1957), *The View from Pompey's Head* (English title *Secret Interlude*, 1955), *Death of a Salesman* (1951 with Frederic March), *Face of Fire* (1959), *Flight of Mars* (1951), *Garden of Evil* (1954), *House of Bamboo* (1955), *Inside the Mafia* (1959), *Monkey on my Back* (1957), *Outcasts of Poker Flat* (1952), *Pony Soldier* (1952), *Pier 5, Havana* (1959). Sandy Perkins
1516 Prospect Boulevard
Waterloo IA 50701

For many years I've been searching for the following: a *Hedda Hopper Special* (1963 approx.) with Marion Davis, Tallulah Bankhead in a *Lucy Show*, a fine print of *Letty Lynton* (1932) with Joan Crawford. I'm also looking for MGM's *Dawn of Sound* and a color version of Eddie Cantor's *Roman Scandals*. I'll gladly defray any cost. Fred Santon
158 Kern Street 4
Salinas CA 93905

I am searching for some hard-to-find tapes of the films of Maria Montez: *Cobra Woman, Arabian Nights, Tangiers, Sudan, Pirates of Monterey, Sirens of Atlantis, Thief of Venice*. Will reimburse expenses. James Sheehan
Myrtle Street, 7C
Adams MA 01220

I am looking for good VHS copies of the *1992 Country Music Association Awards*, plus the Sept. 15, 1993 telecast of *Now* and the March 1993 telecast of *Austin City Limits*, both featuring Mary Chapin Capenter. I will supply tape and reimburse all expenses. Jeff Davis
7 Haskells Road
Piseco NY 12139-9702

I am looking for a good quality VHS copy of *Lucia Di Lamermoor* live from the Metropolitan Opera (1993).
Reon Wadsworth
66 Helen Avenue
Blasdell NY 14219

When I was a little kid, I remember loving a show called *The Banana Splits*. I will gladly pay any expenses for a good VHS copy. Tony Pierce
3300 Glenhurst Avenue
Los Angeles CA 90039

I'm looking for any and all episodes of the 1973-4 sitcoms *The Diana Rigg Show*, the TV movie *In This House of Brede* and any Diana Rigg guest appearance on award shows, talk shows, etc. Will compensate expenses. Holly Kidder
8138 Tidal Road
Norfolk VI 23518

I'm looking for a good VHS copy of the TV movie *In This House of Brede* starring Diana Rigg. It was on TV about 15 years ago. It was the best movie I've ever seen on network television! Willing to pay all costs. Roz Robertshaw
49 Warren Avenue
Tiverton RI 02878

The man I love is desperately trying to buy a copy of *The Beatles—Let it Be* on VHS. It is a documentary on the making of the album. Help me make a surprise gift for him. Will reimburse expenses.
Wendy Rouech
6638 Griffore Drive
Saginaw MI 48604

Send those requests for hard-to-find tapes to Collector's Clearinghouse, 460 West 34 Street, New York, NY 10001. Video Magazine DOES NOT locate tapes; this is a reader-to-reader service only, so please do not send a self-addressed envelope. Requests for copyrighted material must be for personal use only. You may offer to reimburse expenses, but the Clearinghouse is not open to requests for the purchase or sale of tapes.

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VIDEOTESTS

VIDIKRON LCD PROJECTOR

By Brent Butterworth

We've only seen a couple of LCD projectors that can compete with tube-type projectors: a $12,000 data-grade model from Sharp, and Philips' $6,500 LC-1000, which uses a double-line addressing system (which is similar to a line doubler). Although we tested an LC-1000 prototype three years ago, Philips was unable to bring the projector to market until recently, as a professional model. Now Vidikron has introduced a new version of the LC-1000 called the Crystal One, which has circuit modifications to make it consumer-friendly.

The Crystal One is unbelievably easy to set up. Just plop it down on a shelf or a high stand, hook up a video source and connect an antenna or cable, and turn it on. Use the remote control to zoom so that the picture fills the screen, adjust the feet at the projector's rear so that the image lines up with the screen vertically, then use the remote again to focus the lens. That's it—a five-minute procedure.

Like Sharp's LCD projectors, the Crystal One uses a high-powered bulb, three LCD panels (one each for red, green and blue) and dichroic (color-splitting) mirrors to create a color video image. Vidikron includes a spare bulb, which you can install yourself. The metal-halide bulbs last 2,000 hours.

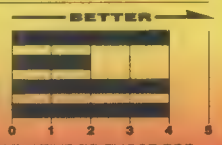
Tube-type projectors need to be converged regularly, so that the images from the three tubes line up properly. You can make simple convergence adjustments yourself, but picky viewers need to call a technician every year or so to get their tube projectors recalibrated. LCD projectors don't need to be converged because the LCDs are fixed in place, but even so, some LCD projectors don't

continued on page 40

VIDIKRON CRYSTAL ONE LCD VIDEO PROJECTOR

PRICE: $7,995

V-RATING: VVVVW



RATINGS ARE RELATIVE TO THOSE FOR OTHER MONITOR/RECEIVERS.

SPECS AND MEASUREMENTS

Weight & Size (h/w/d): 44 lbs., 8 x 22 x 15 inches

Power Consumption: 300 watts average, 350 watts peak; 100-140 volts AC

Screen Size: 40 to 140 inches diagonal

Aspect Ratio: 4:3

Speaker Size: one 3-1/2-inch

Type of Tuning: frequency synthesis

Method of Tuning: programmable scan on set, scan plus direct access on remote

Broadcast Tuning Range: 2 to 13, 14 to 69

Cable Tuning Range: 122 channels—2 to 13, A-1, A-2, A-6 to A-8, A to I, J to W, W+1 to W+84

Remote Control: IR wireless with multi-brand control of VCRs and cable boxes

Inputs: front—S-video/video/stereo audio input; rear—S-video/stereo audio input, BNC video/stereo audio input, BNC RGB/sync/video/stereo audio input, RF input

Outputs: BNC video/stereo audio (loop-through of input 1), S-video (loop-through of S-video input), spring-loaded clips for stereo speakers, 12 VDC to operate screen, 1/4-inch front headphone jack

Internal Audio Amplifier Power: internal speaker—10 watts; external—stereo, 10 watts/channel

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: 450 lines

Picture S/N Ratios (dB): luminance 54, video 54, chroma AM 64, chroma PM 63

Screen Brightness: varies with screen size

Color Temperature: 8,750 Kelvin center-screen

Accuracy of Colors: 3 (average)

Audio Frequency Response: line out 20 Hz-20 kHz, +0.5/-0.2 dB; speaker out 200 Hz-1 kHz, +/-3 dB, -14.3 dB at 20 Hz, +4.6 dB at 20 kHz

Audio S/N: line out 68 dB, speaker out 42.3 dB

Total Harmonic Distortion: line 0.04%, speaker 0.2%

VIDEOTEST PHOTOGRAPHS BY LES MORSILLO

CANON Hi8 CAMCORDER

TEST 748

By Stewart Applegath

When a new line of camcorders appears, it is hard not to have high expectations. When Canon arrived to show us the new ES-1000, I was initially quite taken with its sleek styling and simplified setup. It is intended to be the top end of a new line, and to replace the UCS5 ("Videotests," Nov. '93). Canon seems to be trying to carve out a new place in the market for a high-end camcorder that is simple enough to attract less affluent users. It both succeeds and fails in this attempt.

On the ES-1000, a Hi8 model, Canon goes with a shape reminiscent of Sony's TR line of camcorders. There's an integral four-watt video light, which is becoming a common sight on small camcorders. The ES-1000 also includes a color viewfinder, four auto exposure presets, stereo sound and an optical image stabilizer.

It would seem Canon intended to lay things out so that operating the camcorder would be intuitive. Some of the camera control buttons are large and easy to manipulate. Canon has dispensed with the viewfinder menu system, and as a result, the camcorder gains simplicity but loses versatility. At the same time, Canon made some of the controls maddeningly small, illegible or hard to locate, and has further made some controls difficult to operate. More about this later.

A sliding panel toward the back of the ES-1000 reveals more of the functions Canon has left to manual control—buttons for shutter speed, a character titler, tally light/remote control sensor on/off, counter reset and autofocus on/off.

Like Sony, Canon is going the way of exposure presets—sports, portrait, spotlight (for dramatic lighting situations) and sand-and-snow, in addition to the catch-all auto setting. These controls are on a large rotary control on the lower side of the lens. Canon has given shutter control more priority—the ES-1000 has manual settings up to 1/10,000 of a second. Though Canon has included a backlight function, I would prefer a manual iris over shutter control.

A pleasant surprise for me was the autofocus. It's probably the fastest I have used—you can hardly perceive any lens movement, there's no hunting and the accuracy is exhilarating. I only noticed the autofocus working when I moved from the near-

continued on page 43

Multiburst pattern showing ES-1000 recorder section frequency response, which is good for for Hi8.

CANON ES-1000 Hi8 CAMCORDER

PRICE: $1,900

V-RATING: VVV

	BETTER →
PICTURE	■■■
SOUND	■■■
FEATURES	■■■
VALUE	■■■

0 1 2 3 4 5

RATINGS ARE RELATIVE TO THOSE FOR OTHER S-VHS/Hi8 CAMCORDERS.

STUDIO MAGIC DESKTOP VIDEO PACKAGE

TEST 749

By Timothy Liebe

To date, desktop video's biggest stumbling block has been the relatively high cost of the components. The least expensive of the "studio on a card" systems, Matrox's Personal Producer, lists for $1,995, and even something as basic as a titler generally runs about $800, including genlock card.

Seeing a market niche to be filled, Studio Magic Corp. has targeted its initial product, the $499 Studio Magic for Windows, at the home and small-business video user. Studio Magic is intended as an inexpensive, all-purpose desktop video device—it can grab frames from video, perform wipes and fades, generate and overlay titles, create special effects and perform simple keying.

The Studio Magic interface screen; showing preview windows, controls and the effects menu.

The Studio Magic card, which fits into one 16-bit slot on your 386/25 or better Windows computer, is extremely easy to install—less difficult, in fact, than putting in an internal fax/modem. A set of thorough, well-written instructions (both in the manual and on an enclosed training videotape) takes you through each step of installation, from opening your computer to resetting the card in case of a conflict, and copying the Studio Magic software onto your hard disk. Because it requires no additional connections to your video card, Studio Magic ensures ease of installation and minimizes the potential for system-halting setup errors. Studio Magic Corp. deserves high marks for taking the terror out of "cracking the hood" of your PC.

SPECS AND MEASUREMENTS

Size: fits standard 16-bit expansion slot on PCs

Remote Control: computer keyboard and mouse

Inputs: video, S-video

Output: video

Accessories: S-video to composite video adapter cable, *Introduction to Studio Magic* videotape, Studio Magic software, manual

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: 560 lines

Picture S/N Ratios (dB): unweighted video 57.7, weighted video 60.2, chroma AM 65.7, chroma PM 49.9

Accuracy of Colors: very good

Given its low cost, it should come as no surprise that the Studio Magic is rather limited in its applications. For example, there's no way to cut or mix between two external video sources, even though the Studio Magic card possesses two video inputs. Also, the output of the card is composite only, although one of its inputs will accept S-video signals. It's obvious from both the manual and the training tape that the Studio Magic card is intended to do a good deal more than it currently does. The beta version I received has a few software bugs, which Barry Rubin of Studio Magic Corp. assures me are in the process of being fixed. (Anyone possessing an early version of the Studio Magic software will receive the software upgrade in-

continued on page 44

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PANASONIC VHS VCR

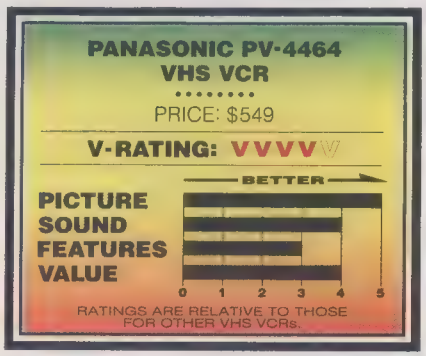
TEST 750

By Timothy Liebe

At first glance, Panasonic's new VHS four-head PV-4464 might be mistaken for an editing VCR. With its shuttle dial, front-panel inputs and large, complicated-looking remote, you might be forgiven for assuming that it would also possess flying erase heads and audio/video dub capability, which it doesn't. But don't be too disappointed—it might not be able to edit tapes, but it does offer some of the best VHS images we've seen.

The 4464 is one of the higher-end models in Panasonic's VHS line, with a street price of around $425. While lacking the editing features of its more expensive cousin, the PV-4466, both share the Dynamorphous heads and advanced noise reduction features that appear to be responsible for the extremely sharp, clear picture the 4464 offers.

Both units also offer Panasonic's SQPB S-VHS quasi-playback feature. This allows you to view S-VHS tapes on standard VHS machines at VHS resolution. While not quite as good as viewing S-VHS tapes on an S-VHS machine, the SQPB feature, coupled with the 4464's superior VHS picture, results in a barely noticeable loss of quality.

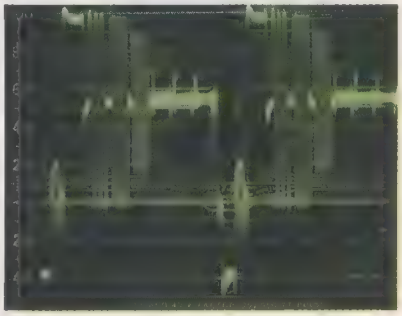


The 4464 also offers VCR Plus with cable box control. Virtually all brands of cable boxes can be programmed to accept commands from the 4464 through infrared transmitters built into the front and top right side of the VCR. This feature is extremely useful if your cable company uses the current generation of addressable cable boxes, which require you to route all your channel switching functions through the box instead of through your VCR.

The 4464's remote control is, given the unit's rather basic features, more than a little daunting. At 10 inches long and possessing a flip-up panel with additional controls, it looks like it would be more at home on *Star Trek* than controlling your VCR.

To its credit, the remote does boast limited universal capability, allowing you to operate many brands of TVs and cable boxes as well as your VCR. This is fortunate, since the 4464 (like some other decks) doesn't respond to the control signals of certain third-party universal remotes.

Other features that the 4464 offers are slow-motion playback, manual override of the digital autotracking (which works both in play and still mode), remote control of two separate Panasonic VCRs, and a shuttle ring on both the unit itself and the remote.



Multiburst pattern showing video frequency response of PV-4464, which is typical for VHS.

Like many Panasonic VCRs, the 4464 also offers several different search features, such as zero search, where the machine stops at the point where the

continued on page 45

SPECS AND MEASUREMENTS

Weight & Size (h/w/d): 9.7 lbs., 3-1/2 x 16-7/8 x 11-1/2 inches

Power Use: 23 watts

Jacks: front—video/stereo audio input; rear—video/stereo audio input and output, RF input and output

Tape Speeds: SP, LP, EP

Video Heads: 4

Cue & Review Search: locking/non-locking 9x SP, 15x LP, 27x EP

Fast Forward/Rewind Time: 4-1/2 min. for 120-minute tape

Edit Protocol: none

Timer Backup: 4 hours

Remote Control: IR wireless with multibrand cable box and TV control

Program Start Locator/Index/Cue: VISS index search with auto mark and bidirectional search for up to 99 marks

Audio: linear mono, hi-fi AFM stereo

Tuning Method: frequency synthesis

Channel Selectors: programmable scan on VCR, scan plus direct access on remote

Preset Method: auto program and manual add/delete

Cable Tuning Range: 2 to 13, 5A, A-5 to A-1, A to I, J to W, AA to EEE, 65 to 94, 100-125

Timer: 8-event/1-month

Key Features: VCR Plus with cable box conrol, shuttle dial, frame advance, slow motion, speed play

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: 240 lines

Picture S/N Ratios (dB): unweighted video 46.4 SP, 45.6 LP, 44.4 EP; weighted video 51.2 SP, 50.8 LP, 49.8 EP, chroma AM 49.3 SP, 46.5 LP, 44.7 EP; chroma PM 42.2 SP, 39 LP, 41.3 EP

Audio Frequency Response: hi-fi—20 Hz-20 kHz, +0.1/-2.8 dB; linear (-3 dB)—75 Hz-10 kHz SP, 80 Hz-5 kHz LP, 75 Hz-4 kHz EP

Hi-Fi Dynamic Range: 85.7 dB

Linear Audio S/N: 42.3 dB

Audio Distortion: hi-fi 0.3%, linear 0.9%

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JVC S-VHS-C CAMCORDER

By Stewart Applegath

TEST 751

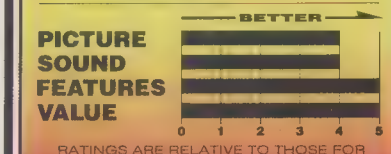
When it comes to palm-sized camcorders, one might accuse some *Video Magazine* editors—myself included—of being Sony-wonks. Let's face it, Sony has produced some of the finest models of this type. However, JVC's new GR-SZ7 S-VHS-C camcorder makes this much less a one-sided competition.

At $1,599, the GR-SZ7 is loaded with features. Few of them are window-dressing. In addition to the electronic stabilizer and color viewfinder, it puts together a staggering number of production effects, transitions and utilities. Though it also has its share of flaws, when considered in context of the whole package, they are relatively easy to live with.

JVC GR-SZ7 S-VHS-C CAMCORDER

PRICE: $1,599

V-RATING: VVVVV



RATINGS ARE RELATIVE TO THOSE FOR OTHER S-VHS/Hi8 CAMCORDERS.

The GR-SZ7 has more manual control than I have seen on any current camcorder. There are many, many special-effects possibilities: fades, dissolves, mosaics, a cinema (letterbox) mode, a classic film mode (which letterboxes with a flicker effect), sepia, video echo, slow shutter (at three speeds), strobe, monotone (black-and-white) and more.

There are three main mode settings:

SPECS AND MEASUREMENTS

Weight & Size (h/w/d): 1.8 lbs. without battery and cassette, 4-1/2 x 4-1/8 x 7-3/8 inches

Power Use: 6 volts DC, 8 watts

Image Sensor: 1/3-inch CCD, 560,000 gross pixels

Lens: f/1.2, 10x (5-50mm) two-speed power zoom

Filter Diameter: 46mm

Minimum Focusing Distance: 1 inch at wide-angle, 33 inches at telephoto

Focus: contrast-type TTL auto with auto macro, switchable to manual with rotary knob control

Iris: auto switchable to manual with onscreen indicator, plus AE/effect modes for snapshot, motor drive, cinema, classic film, strobe, slow shutter, video echo, monotone, sepia, sports and twilight

Fader: to black, white, mosaic or black-and-white, plus wipe transitions for slide, door, scroll, shutter corner, dissolve and auto select

Shutter Speeds (sec.): 1/60 (normal), 1, 1/6, 1/15, 1/250-1/500

White Balance: auto with options for manual, sunny, cloudy and halogen

Viewfinder: electronic 0.7-inch LCD

Viewfinder Controls: diopter focus and viewing angle

Microphone: stereo electret condenser with switchable wind noise filter

Jacks: S-video/video/stereo audio out, DC out for RF convertor, external mic, remote, edit

Tape Speeds: SP, EP

Video Heads: 4 (small head drum)

Edit Search: 1x bidirectional

Cue & Review Search: 3x SP, 7x EP

Fast Forward/Rewind Time: 5-3/4 min. for 20-min. cassette

Edit Protocol: R.A. Edit

Remote Control: wired/wireless to camcorder and wireless to multibrand VCR

Program Start Locator/Index/Cue: VISS auto manual marking, but no reading

Audio: linear mono, hi-fi AFM stereo

Timer: delay 15, 30, 60 or 300 seconds; animation 1/4-, 1/2- or 1-second bursts; interval 1/4-, 1/2- or 1-second bursts every 15, 30, 60 or 300 seconds

Key Features: electronic image stabilization, multiple auto exposure and special-effect modes, digital zoom to 100x, frame advance, slow motion, audio dub, insert edit, flying erase head

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: camera 415 lines; viewfinder 350 lines; recorder 390 lines S-VHS SP, 360 S-VHS EP, 240 lines VHS SP and EP

Picture S/N Ratios (dB): unweighted luminance 47.7 SP, 49.3 EP; weighted luminance 50.8 SP, 51.3 EP; unweighted video 37.5 SP, 36.9 EP; weighted video 43.5 SP, 43 EP; chroma AM 42.9 SP, 41.1 EP; chroma PM 36.4 SP, 35.2 EP

Minimum Illumination: 6.5 lux for 50 IRE

Approx. Battery Life (man. focus/no zoom): 40 min.

Audio Frequency Response: hi-fi 32 Hz-20 kHz, +0.1/-3 dB, -4.6 at 20 Hz; linear (-3 dB) 100 Hz-10 kHz SP, 100 Hz-4 kHz EP

Hi-Fi Dynamic Range: 88.6 dB

Linear Audio S/N: 42.3 dB

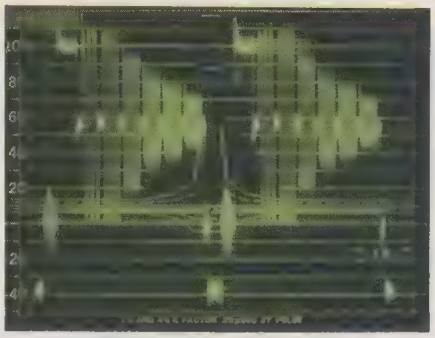
Audio Distortion: hi-fi 0.3%, linear 0.9%

auto, preset and variable preset. Each incrementally increases your control over recording functions and effects. It does take time to become familiar with all of the possibilities and the interconnections among them. However, once you break the complexity barrier, it comes together pretty easily.

Full auto is basically a point-and-shoot mode. In preset mode, you have a choice of two buttons or main categories—P.AE/effect (special effects) and fade/wipe. When each is activated a menu comes up—in the former, a choice between cinema, sports, twilight, sepia and monotone; under fade/wipe, you'll see white fader, mosaic, auto select, corner wipe and dissolve.

You can choose to wipe or dissolve to or from a color, or from a live picture. An internal picture memory stores the last scene taped, then uses it to make the transition into next scene. (Turning the camera off will erase the scene held in memory.) The only thing that bothered me about all the choices is that sound is not recorded during the wipe/fade process.

On the preset setting, you are presented with set menus of effects and wipes, while on variable preset you can



Multiburst pattern showing frequency response of GR-SZ7, which is very good for S-VHS-C.

completely customize the menu. On the fade/wipe menu you can choose auto select, a nice feature which programs a sequence of eight fades or wipes. Each time you go to pause and from pause to record, a different effect is triggered: corner box wipes, barn doors, side-to-side, and so on. This adds variety to your videos without the trouble of programming each effect individually.

There's also a wind-noise reducer, an alarm and a choice of zoom magnification—10x optical, and 20x and 100x digital. Variable preset adds a gain function, and controls for choosing more effect/fade/wipe possiblilities. The camcorder offers time-lapse and animation features, and comes with a double battery charger.

Another unusual option is that you can adjust the sharpness, tint, and color of the image *before* shooting the picture. It's like having a built-in proc amp. Though these are subtle adjustments, I wish I'd had this feature on my old Canon A1, whose color always seemed too red. There is also a manual white balance, a feature that is becoming rare these days—the only current, comparable camcorder that offers this adjustment is the Sony CCD-TR700.

Wisely, JVC has included a microphone jack, though it has dispensed with a headphone jack. Including both would be better, but I consider a mic jack far more important.

JVC offers an electronic stablizer on the GR-SZ7. In full auto mode the stabilizer is on all the time. The electronic stabilizer offered on the GR-SZ7 is not as functional as I would have liked—it seems to err a bit on the side of under-compensation. This becomes especially noticeable on the highter digital zoom settings. Though the image didn't drift at the end of a pan or tilt, the stabilizer

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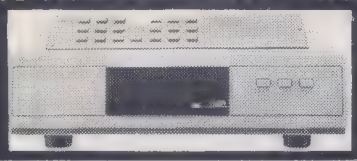

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didn't take enough shake out.

Iris control—available on preset and variable preset—is located on the lower side of the camcorder in the form of plus/minus buttons. I would have preferred a control button that didn't have to be pushed repeatedly for each incremental change. Hitting these buttons results in camera jiggle if you want to adjust the setting while recording. (Other setting changes on the GR-SZ7 can be triggered by holding the button longer, rather than repeated pushes.)

Video snap mode offers a Polaroid snapshot effect with live sound. The button, located near the power on/off switch, triggers a white-bordered digital still that looks and sounds like a still picture being taken. A black door wipe is also included to give a still camera shutter effect, and there's a motor-drive effect that gives you a series of brief framed stills. Fortunately, sound recording through the mic is not blocked in this mode as it is when wipes and effects are taking place. And with the audio dubbing capability the GR-SZ7 offers, you can add commentary after the fact.

The GR-SZ7 has a strong provision for manual focus—a rotary wheel at lower front. Even on full auto, you can push a button on the end of the focus wheel to switch to manual mode. This is much more convenient than most comparable models, including the CCD-TR700, which set their manual focus trigger buttons strangely far from the focus wheel. The autofocus worked fairly well, but had a slight tendency to hunt in the face of subtle distinctions of distance.

Fragile Flap: The GR-SZ7's latching playback control cover seems like it could break off easily.

Something I haven't seen before is the illuminated indigo LCD display on the side—it makes functions much more legible, day or night. In addition to displaying functions, it also gives a graphic readout of battery and tape status. With my Sony CCD-TR101, I had to buy an expensive LED-display battery for this convenience.

A random assemble editing feature allows you to program up to eight cuts or scenes for automated editing onto another VCR. A menu shows in/out points as you program them. Aside from a few limitations (it requires a minimum one-second shot and 15 seconds of preroll, and accuracy is limited to about plus or minus one second), it is easy to use. The remote is compatible with many brands of VCRs.

JVC has put very few controls on the body of the camcorder—most are in the menu system. Playback controls are under a plastic panel, which just about begs to be snapped off, in front of the viewfinder.

I have one major compaint with the controls—in regular fast-forward mode, the tape moves slowly. You can speed it up by holding the fast-forward button for two seconds, but you then lose the tape counter, both in the viewfinder and on the indigo display. When it's finished, the counter resets at zero. During an edit session, this feature alone would make the camcorder *very* inconvenient.

The picture quality of the GR-SZ7 was generally good. The color rendition was very accurate and colors were well-

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saturated. There was very little noise present. Horizontal recorded resolution in SP is 390 lines, 340 in EP. Even at the EP speed, image quality is quite good, making it possible to exploit the two-hour maximum recording capability of JVC's new 40-minute S-VHS-C cassette.

The LCD color viewfinder's resolution was average—usable, but not spectacular. The viewfinder has some very common sense readouts, such as tape remaining (in minutes), so there's no guesswork. The pause indicator is very visible, appearing boldly in the upper middle of the screen so you're never uncertain about whether you're actually recording or not.

Audio performance was quite good, with a dip in frequency response only in the extreme low bass. Additionally, there was no noise leakage from the tape carrier or zoom mechanism—a welcome change from the norm.

Though the GR-SZ7 has slight flaws, it is a great package overall. For a reasonable price, JVC has put together an unreasonably good camcorder. For both shooting and editing, no other camcorder that I can think of offers this kind of value. ■

LCD PROJECTOR

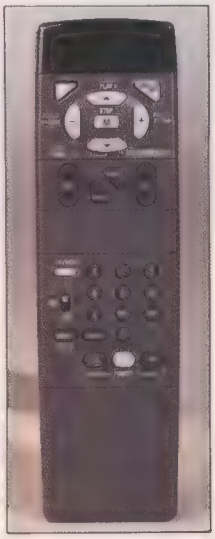
continued from page 30

have perfect convergence. However, the convergence on the Crystal One we tested was *dead on*.

The Crystal One is just as easy to use as a TV set, because it *is* a TV set—there's a built-in tuner with closed captioning, three video/audio inputs (one on front), parental control and timer features, and even a mono speaker, a stereo audio amplifier and a headphone jack. All that's missing is picture-in-picture. Because the Crystal One has a 15.75-megahertz RGB/sync input, you can connect a computer with a CGA video card. Vidikron also offers an accessory that lets you connect VGA-equipped computers.

Blow off the tiny internal speaker—instead, connect two good speakers to the Crystal One's stereo amp and set up the speakers so they straddle the screen. (Better yet, get a surround-sound system.) We rate the audio at two; add good speakers and we'd give it a four.

Take a careful look at your room before you consider a Crystal One—its mounting requirements are unusual. Typically, it needs to be at least 15 feet from the screen—much farther than a tube-type projector—and five to eight feet off the floor. At first, I thought this inconvenient, but soon realized it's perfect for most living rooms. Put the projector on a shelf or bookcase behind you,



Just Like A TV Set: Although the Crystal One is a front projector, it has a tuner and a remote control (left) that make it operate like a typical high-end TV set.

and it's completely unobtrusive. Of course, like all front projectors, the Crystal One must be used in a dark or very dimly lit room.

The remote control offers buttons for volume and channel, input selection, closed captioning and the menu system. It also controls many brands of VCRs and cable boxes. The front panel also

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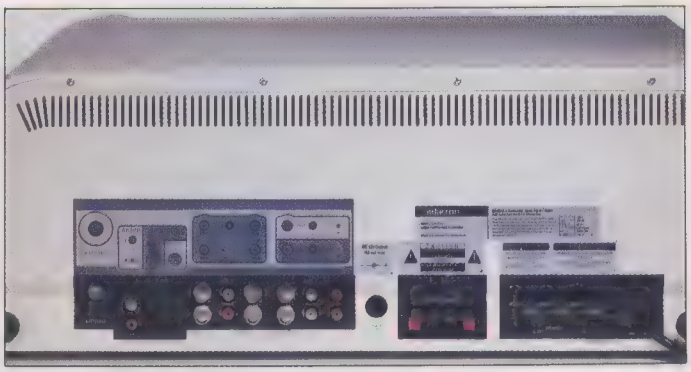
has a full set of controls.

Technical editor Lancelot Braithwaite and I both enjoyed watching the Crystal One. At a viewing distance of 16 feet and an image size of eight feet diagonal, I noticed pixels only on a few shots. (I couldn't identify a particular pattern or subject matter that made them more apparent.) The pixels are easy to see if you move close to the screen, but at a practical viewing distance, they didn't bother me or Lance.

As with other LCD projectors, the Crystal One's contrast ratio (the ratio of the brightest parts of the picture to the darkest) is less than that of a tube-type projector—I couldn't achieve deep blacks while maintaining a good average picture level. The overall effect is a slight washing-out of the picture—the Crystal One's Achilles' heel. If you can deal with the low contrast, you'll probably like this projector; if you can't, you won't. I found that in a totally dark room, I could live with it.

I was also bothered by a slight shift in color from right to left—as a subject's face moved across the screen, its hue changed. Lance's measurements squared with my subjective impressions: The color temperature was about 9,000 Kelvin on the left side, 8,750 in the center, and 8,050 on the right.



Interesting Inputs: The Crystal One has the usual video and audio inputs, plus an RGB/sync input for CGA graphics.

Further measurements from Lance revealed about a 10-percent variation in brightness from top to bottom and side to side. However, I didn't notice a "hot spot," a common malady with LCDs caused by the center of the picture being brighter than the edges. (Note that Lance's signal-to-noise ratio measurements are based on comparisons with measured direct-view TVs, because we know of no way to measure S/N directly from LCDs.) The projector's comb filter was quite good—it produced very little dot crawl, even on demanding material.

Despite these criticisms, I'd still prefer the Crystal One to most video-grade, tube-type projectors. Why? Because of the double-line addressing system. Video-grade projectors produce images broken up into horizontal scan lines that many viewers consider totally unacceptable. But the Crystal One produces a very smooth picture with no scan lines, and none of the motion artifacts and smeared look many line doublers create.

The Crystal One reminds me of my beloved Conrad-Johnson PV-2a tube preamp, which has no controls except for source selectors, volume and balance. Its simplicity and pleasing performance makes it easy to live with. Don't worry about tweaking, just enjoy. ■

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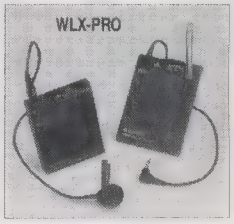
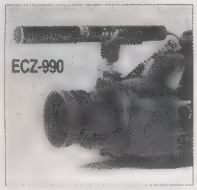
After using your camcorder the first time, you realize that the built-in microphone picks up sounds from all directions, including those you don't want. And, when shooting from a distance, you can't hear your subject's voice clearly. Azden, the leader in quality audio for video, offers a full line of microphones to make your sound as good as your pictures.

This powerful professional miniature VHF wireless system has a range of over 300 feet. It allows you to shoot from a distance and pick up your subject's voice clearly. It has 2 switchable frequencies, and it comes with 2 mics (handheld and clip-on). The transmitter clips to the subject's belt, and the mini receiver can attach to the camera (shoe mount & velcro included) or be kept in your breast pocket.

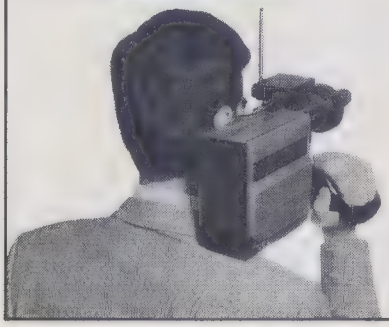
A professional VHF handheld microphone system with no wires. All the same features, and receiver as the WMS-PRO.



Lapel microphone system. Same receiver as WMS-PRO.



New 7" long directional mic. Allows you to zoom in on subject's voice, reducing saide noises. Range 35-40 feet.



A mini 3 channel mic mixer for recording sound from 2 add-on mics and a personal stereo, while you're shooting. Only 2 1/8"x3 1/4" it can be attached to your camera or clipped to the handstrap. Cables included, needs no batteries.

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HI 8 CAMCORDER

continued from page 31

est possible object (touching the lens) to one across the room. Though the ES-1000 offers a manual focus override, I wasn't comfortable with the thumbwheel control or its position.

The optical stabilizer works well—there is none of the image degradation or size loss that often accompanies electronic stabilizers. What bothered me was the operation of the stabilizer switch. Canon has made it difficult to turn it on and off easily. Granted, once the stabilizer is turned on, it can be left on. Nevertheless, I would have preferred something on the switch to give my finger purchase in turning it on and off.

The recorded picture is average for Hi8. Color rendition is pleasing and detail is good. However, there is noticeable video noise, more than we found on the UCS5. Casual users—the market Canon apparently wishes to woo with the ES-1000—will certainly find the picture acceptable, but serious users will find it noticeably noisy compared to the Sony CCD-TR700.

Audio performance is average from a measurement standpoint, although the mic produced an unusually clear stereo effect. Some tape transport and zoom motor noise is picked up by the onboard mic—it will be readily apparent when the ambient sound level is low or moderate.

The color viewfinder looks fine—I didn't have as much trouble discerning fine focus on the ES-1000 as I did on the Sony CCD-TR700. It looks like color viewfinders are here to stay, and this one did the job pretty well, although all of our editors would prefer more LCD resolution.

The four-watt video light provides adequate illumination for basic needs. It has about a 12-degree horizontal coverage, which is relatively narrow for video lights—good enough for one or two subjects at close range.

Any camcorder combines features and omissions, strengths and weaknesses. In the case of ES-1000, it is not clear that this calculus has been completely thought out. Although the performance is acceptable, the camcorder has several operational problems. If this were a midpriced unit, we could let some of these problems slide. However, this will be the high end of Canon's line (except for the very expensive L1 and L2 models), so we have some bones to pick.

More thought needs to go into the placement of controls, especially the playback buttons. Located under a small flip-up panel on the top front of the camcorder, these controls are *tiny* and difficult to use. It is hard to distinguish them because they're marked in relief, rather than with contrasting-color labels. They are virtually illegible in average lighting. And the VTR record button is difficult to operate, tucked into a cranny.

It's not much of a leap to assume that Canon wants to discourage us from using these buttons *altogether*, so we will use the remote alone. There are, however, a significant number of people who still use the camcorder playback controls. Perhaps Canon could compromise here

I feel the eject button should be moved, and that it should also be labeled. It is too easy to eject accidentally

SPECS AND MEASUREMENTS

Weight & Size (h/w/d): 2 lbs. with battery and cassette, 4-5/8 x 4-3/4 x 7-3/4 inches

Power Use: 6 volts DC, 7.5 watts

Image Sensor: 1/3-incn CCD, 410,000 gross pixels

Lens: f/1.8, 12x (5.2-62.4mm) multispeed power zoom

Filter Diameter: 49mm, but 55mm filters with step-up ring recommended

Minimum Focusing Distance: 0.4 inches at wide-angle, 32 inches at telephoto

Focus: TTL auto with auto macro, switchable to manual with thumbwheel control

Iris: auto with switchable AE modes for portrait, sports, spotlight and sand & snow, plus backlight compensator

Fader: to black, hold-down type, approx. 4 secs.

Shutter Speeds (sec.): 1/60 (normal), 1/100, 1/250, 1/500, 1/1,000, 1/2,000, 1/4,000, 1/10,000

White Balance: 64-zone white extraction method, auto only—2,800-8,000 Kelvin

Viewfinder: electronic 0.7-inch color LCD with 140,000 pixels

Viewfinder Controls: diopter focus, positioning

Microphone: stereo electret condenser

Jacks: S-video/video/stereo audio input and output, DC out for optional RF convertor

Tape Speed: SP only

Video Heads: 2

Cue & Review Search: forward 9x/19x, reverse 7x/19x

Fast Forward/Rewind Time: 6/7 min. for 120-min. tape

Edit Protocol: LANC

Remote Control: IR wireless with camera and playback controls

Audio: hi-fi AFM stereo

Titles/Graphics: 2 lines, each 16 characters

Special Features: optical image stabilizer, four auto exposure modes plus backlight compensator, flying erase head, character titler, built-in light

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: camera 425 lines; viewfinder 325 lines; recorder 400 lines Hi8, 250 lines 8mm

Picture S/N Ratios (dB): unweighted luminance 45.3 ME, 43.9 MP; weighted luminance 49.5 ME, 48.3 MP; unweighted video 40.3, weighted video 48.3; chroma AM 43.8, chroma PM 39.4

Minimum Illumination: 8.7 lux for 50 IRE

Approx. Battery Life (man. focus/no zoom): 40 min. light off, 20 min. light on

Audio Frequency Response: 20 Hz-10 kHz, +0.03/-3 dB, down -6.3 dB at 20 kHz

Hi-Fi Dynamic Range: 75.9 dB

Audio Distortion: 0.4%

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when getting my hand into a comfortable shooting position—the tape carrier unit was inadvertently forced out into my palm a number of times. Technical editor Lancelot Braithwaite also feels the location of the record search control is inconvenient.

In light of the ES-1000's position as a top-end model, all here feel that the omission of mic and headphone jacks is a major flaw, especially since noise leakage from the transport and zoom motors is evident. We hope this will be addressed on future versions.

In attempting to make a simple-to-use package, Canon has given us some strong features—a terrific autofocus, a color viewfinder and a solid image stabilizer. There seems to be a lot of unrealized potential in this camcorder. Canon should go further to make the ES-1000 a true high-end model. ■

STUDIO MAGIC

continued from page 32

corporating these fixes free of charge.)

For example, although both the tape and the manual discuss keying in a title over a computer-generated graphic or solid-color background, Studio Magic can at present only key titles over live video or black. Also, while tape and manual mention the ability to capture live video frames in color to your computer (useful not only for desktop video purposes, but for print graphics as well), you can currently capture only black-and-white images.

Although these problems should be taken care of in the software upgrade, there's another problem with the frame capture. As it stands, Studio Magic requires that you pause your video source deck so that the capture can take place. Unless your input VCR possesses a rock-solid digital still and the tape you're pausing is in excellent shape (or you use a video camera as a source), your frame capture will frequently come out with wavy lines and/or glitches. Using the digital still on a Panasonic WJ-AVE5 video mixer, however, resulted in extremely good frame captures.

The overlay/genlock function is also less than ideally stable. Keying in titles over taped video often resulted in jumpy text, a problem caused by the inherently unstable sync of most VCRs. However, titles keyed over live video from a camera are rock-solid, as are titles over footage passed through a video mixer.

The titling feature in and of itself has a lot to recommend it. Although you can't scroll titles like you can with stand-alone character generators like Videonics' TitleMaker 2000, Studio Magic can use any Windows TrueType typeface for titles, allowing users a great deal of flexibility in both fonts and sizes.

You're given 16 title colors to choose from, and a duplicate feature for the creation of drop shadows (the training tape clearly explains what they are and how they work). There is a slight software bug—the cursor appears onscreen at the end of each line of title—but this can be easily worked around by spacing past the edge of the screen after the title line has been typed. Although there are a few conveniences I would like to see included—like automatic centering and line spacing—the titling feature, together with the genlock/overlay, is alone worth the cost of the Studio Magic card.

Another useful and fun feature is the collection of 21 image effects that you can use to modify your external video source, including black-and-white, sepia, color negative, black-and-white negative, and Terminator (which may not

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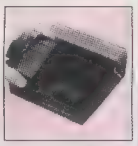

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look exactly like what Schwarzenegger saw, but looks great nonetheless). These effects can also be edited fairly easily, except for the overreliance on one color or the blacking out of another.

The lumikey is one of six different means by which you can place titles or images over or behind external video. The default setting is a straight downstream keyer (like on the WJ-AVE5), which throws out the black in a stored image or title and replaces it with video from one of the inputs. The "weather forecast" setting, by contrast, places a computer-generated graphic in any white area of your video. There is also a control for adjusting the whiteness of an area before keying.

From a picture quality standpoint, Studio Magic is very clean, with less noise than most video mixers, and a respectable horizontal resolution of 560 lines. Our picture rating of three refers to the frame store and jitter problems.

While I wouldn't consider Studio Magic for Windows a viable replacement for a video mixer like Panasonic's WJ-AVE5/7 or Videonics' MX-1, I do recommend it highly as a means to augment either. Its street price of around $400 and large number of features more than make up for its limitations, and Studio Magic Corp.'s desire to create powerful, low-cost desktop video tools is to be commended. This is a product—and a company—to watch. ■

VHS VCR

continued from page 34

tape time counter is set to zero; book mark search, which stops at the end of the recorded portion of your videotape so you can continue taping from there; and VHS Index Search System (VISS), which puts a signal on the tape that you can tell the VCR to find at a later date.

As mentioned above, the 4464's picture is extraordinary, with very little luminance or chrominance noise. Like the other top VHS decks we've tested (the JVC HR-VP600 comes to mind) the picture is very clean and smooth-looking, with no distracting artifacts. While not as impressive as the picture, the hi-fi and monaural sound both are also very good.

Overgrown Control: The PV-4464's remote is strangely large, given that the VCR has no editing features.

Though not an editing VCR, the PV-4464 is an extremely good unit for home theater and timeshifting. It's a bit more expensive than most comparable VHS VCRs, but its superb picture and solid sound quality make the additional investment worthwhile. If you're looking for a reasonably-priced VCR to set up a home theater around, the 4464 should definitely be on your short list. ■

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BY JOE WIESENFELDER

How to give tight spaces home theater sound, pictures, drama

LET'S GET SMALL

There's something about home theater: *Everybody* seems to like it. And unlike audio or video taken alone, home theater is something that average folks don't just like—it's something they want. In their own homes. Now.

Home theater design is an art of compromise, regardless of the size or layout of the room. But small rooms carry special hurdles, and if we're to bring home theater to the masses, we have to clear those hurdles—or at least find a way to run around them without getting caught.

In this guide to small-room home theater, I'll lean toward frugality, presupposing that anyone who's restricted to a small room is also restricted in his or her budget. If you can afford to put home theater in every small room of the mansion, you can also afford a certified installer, who would be delighted to help you choose high-margin equipment.

Any home theater—no matter how large or small—needs a few basics: a good-sized TV, a hi-fi stereo VCR (and/or a laserdisc player), a Dolby Pro-Logic receiver (or separate Pro-Logic processor and amps) and at least five speakers (left, center, right and two surrounds). But as we'll see, in a small room, the way you set up the system and prepare the room is as important as the equipment you choose.

Reflected Glory: Dipole surround speakers like NHT's HDP-1 reflect sound off walls.

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

God bless video. If environment had as profound an effect on monitor performance as it does on speakers, home theater would be about as popular as *The Last Action Hero*. The benefits of different screen sizes and locations are pretty intuitive. How large you're willing to go depends on how far you can sit from the monitor, what fits in the room, and what you want to pay. As a practical minimum for screen size, insist on 27 inches.

Direct-view TVs are available in sizes up to 40 inches, and rear-projection sets start as small as 41 inches, like Sony's KPR-41EXR95. There's also Mitsubishi's VS-4553, a 45-inch "tabletop" unit. Many rear-projection TV suppliers have chiseled their products down to about 20 inches in depth, bringing the room-encroachment factor close to that of a conventional tube. Moving closer to the set increases the viewing angle, but one *can* get too close, effectively collapsing the perception of three-dimensionality we're able to trick our minds into from farther away, or turning the picture's scan lines into venetian blinds.

Regardless of the viewing distance, you may run into picture/sound discontinuity while using a smaller screen. The problem is that movie soundtracks are mixed for theaters, in which the left and right speakers are directly behind the extreme ends of the screen. As a result, unless you have your main speakers very close to the TV, the *sound* of a motorcycle speeding outward from the center of the picture will jump to the side speaker even when its image is still visible at the edge of the screen.

The many Dolby-encoded TV broadcasts you can receive nowadays weight the soundtrack toward the center, saving the left and right channels for off-screen sounds, like music or applause during Letterman. Thankfully, dialog is seldom panned across the soundstage in

movies anymore, so most people spread their speakers out for a wide soundstage and put up with the occasional errant sound effect. Personally, I'd rather spend happy hour with the guys from the Zima commercials.

We'll address all the pros and cons of small rooms, but first you have to come to terms with the fact that the choices you make in audio equipment and placement will be dictated by your room—particularly its size, shape and texture—as well as by your sensibilities regarding sound and decor. Only experimentation will lead to success. If you're looking for easy answers, try stamp collecting.

Sonic Surprise: Though it costs only $370, Sherwood's RV-5030R is a great-sounding, full-featured receiver.

THE GEAR YOU HEAR

Once you've secured a hi-fi VCR or a laserdisc player, the driving force behind the small home theater is an A/V receiver. These include a Pro-Logic processor, amps for all five speakers, and audio/video switching. Many solid ones are available for about $400 list price (see "Power for Pennypinchers," July '94). To help you choose a receiver for a small room, there are five important things to know about power in an audio system:

1) *Doubling amplifier power does* not *double volume capability.* Doubling amplifier power increases the maximum possible sound level by three decibels—a significant but not extreme difference. (You'd have to come up one dB before average folks would even notice a change.) If a 100-watt amp can play three dB louder than a 50-watt amp, clearly the difference between a 50- and 60-watt amp is probably negligible.

2) *At comfortable listening levels, an amp is putting out far less power than one would think.* Many TVs have five-watt amps. They're not hi-fi, but they're loud and clear enough to hear, for sure.

3) *Usually, not much really happens when you don't have enough power.* People that have a passing interest in audio usually know that pushing an amplifier past its limits results in a type of distortion called clipping. Somehow, enlightenment seems to end there, because many people believe that if they clip their amplifiers, Satan himself—a true phantom image—will emerge through the floor and direct fire to spring forth from their loudspeakers, igniting any thing and anyone that happens to be in the sweet spot. This just isn't the case.

What does happen is far less dramatic, but equally repugnant when you know what to listen for. Most receivers incorporate protection circuitry that

Shrunken Surround: Atlantic Technology's System 250 speakers and subwoofer, and from the top, Sony's KV-27V55 27-inch TV, Panasonic's PV-4464 VHS VCR, Harmon-Kardon's AVR20 A/V receiver and Panasonic's LX-600 combi player, all in a RoomTunes TV stand.

shuts them down when clipping reaches a certain level, but there's no telling what percentage of "acceptable" distortion you're putting up with at volumes below the shutoff point. Fact is, you've probably been in Hell and not even known it. What many people write off as loudness is actually just distortion. The cleanest systems I've heard just don't sound "loud" even when they are.

Speakers vary in their distortion levels, so the best way to familiarize oneself with clipping is by driving the same speakers—preferably your own—with different amounts of power. The effect of clipping is often called a "sheen," appropriate because the distortion adds a high-frequency brightness. "Hard" and "edgy" work, too. That high-frequency distortion is hell on tweeters (paradoxically, underpowered amps blow more speakers than overpowered ones), so you shouldn't push your luck in acquainting yourself with clipping—a couple seconds is usually enough. When you know what different wattages will get you, and what you really get when you don't have enough, you'll be better able to judge your needs.

Slim Big-Screen:
Sony's 20-inch-deep KPR-41EXR96.

4) *Theoretically, a speaker will sound six dB louder if you halve its distance from you.* That means the closer speaker would need one quarter the amp power to produce the same level at the listening position as the far speaker. So you can see that a low-powered A/V receiver should be able to work in a small room. Sony and Technics have models that sell for less than $300 street price, and a new one from Kenwood sells for around $300.

Know that entry-level units do not have preamp outputs that would allow the addition of power amps in the future. The big push at retail is for equal power to the front three channels. In theory, this is a good idea if you plan to hook up three identical speakers, a la THX. It may not be necessary for a smaller center speaker with a higher sensitivity (remember, a three-dB-higher spec means half the power is needed), especially since Pro-Logic diverts the power-hungry bass signals to the side speakers in this type of arrangement.

5) *Don't get too hung up on power ratings, because they're often not reliable.* Unless the manufacturer rates power output with all channels driven, from 20 Hz to 20 kHz (the full audible spectrum) at less than 0.5 percent distortion, you don't know what you're getting. This underscores the truism that you really must listen for yourself, preferably in your own room and with your own speakers. If you deal with a specialty audio/video retailer, as we always recommend, you should be able to trade for other equipment if there's a problem—especially if you trade up. When in doubt, it's usually a good idea to go with the higher-priced model. The difference in price is negligible if you think of the receiver, a long-lasting component, as an investment.

If the room's small, the speakers probably should be too. One of the best ways to do home theater in a small room is to use five good bookshelf speakers of the same model. You heard me right. A speaker's job is to reproduce sound faithfully, and a good speaker is a good speaker. The advantages are many: All will match in timbre, or tonal quality—one of the most important attributes; small two-way speakers tend to image well; and many have decent bass output down to about 60 Hertz, so they'll do the basic job fine until you get your income tax refund and add a subwoofer. What's more, you can always find a use for bookshelf speakers in the future if you upgrade to a bigger home theater.

The Paradigm Titan, PSB Alpha, B&W 2001 and KEF KEF-120 all deliver *amazing* performance for under $200 a pair; the Phase Technology 335ES is also a winner at less than $240/pair. Boston Acoustics' HD5 goes for under $150 a pair. The B&W is shielded for use near direct-view TVs, and shielded versions of the Paradigm, Phase Tech, and Boston sell for about $20 more per pair (fortunately, some manufacturers sell this type of speaker singly). Some companies even make complete systems of small home theater speakers, like the Atlantic Technology system featured in this month's "Hands On."

After narrowing your speaker choices by listening, pick the one with the smoothest off-axis response. Listen for tonal changes when you step from the center of the speaker to its side. Drive just *one* speaker with pink noise (inter-station FM radio static will do in a pinch, but you may have to turn off the tuner's muting circuit) and listen for sound that is consistent in tone across a wide area. It's okay if the off-axis sound is lower in level, but if the response is ragged, early reflections off the side walls—which will be strong in a small room if it has reflective walls—will

wreak havoc on timbre.

If your speakers are too close to the walls, even smooth early reflections can mess with your imaging as well, behaving almost like another speaker and drawing the image outward. The cure is to not spread the speakers out too far, or to use some acoustic treatment, which I'll address shortly.

NHT sells two small shielded speakers, the Models 1.1 ($380/pair) and 1.3A ($500/pair), that angle the front baffle inward to reduce sidewall reflections. A bonus to these speakers is that they are timbre-matched to the Model 1.1C center speaker ($185), one of the best you can buy. Its advantage is its design—that of a two-way bookshelf speaker. Like the other products I've mentioned, it may look a little dorky standing upright on a TV, but its radiation pattern is better than that of most horizontally oriented center speakers, the response of which roughen off-center.

MB Quart's $230 QL CTR is another two-way center speaker, said to match the small QL Point Five satellites ($300 a pair) as well as larger Quart speakers. If you go for floor-standing speakers, check out narrow cabinet designs like those from JBL, a/d/s/ and others. One of the first companies to produce speakers for video applications, NHT (once again) has column loudspeakers with a footprint 5.5 inches square. A switch on the front of the $725/pair VT-10 lets you optimize its directivity for movie or music sound.

Front And Center: MB Quart's QL CTR center speaker.

GETTING DOWN

I wish there were a formula for the diameter or sensitivity of subwoofer needed in a room of a given size, but it's not that simple. There are too many variables. Regardless, you should be able to get by with a smaller sub in a small room, especially if the entrances have doors that can help trap bass energy inside. Most good powered subs start at around $500. Check out Klipsch and the tall, narrow units from JBL, which may be easier to hide. Models from MB Quart and NHT that match well with the satellites mentioned above ring up just $400 to $500.

Buying these babies will be easier than placing them in a small room. The corner is tempting, but there boominess usually prevails. You may want to start out there to energize the room's standing waves, or room modes, so you can hear what you're dealing with. The effect of standing waves, for our purposes, is a non-uniformity of bass sounds at different points of the room as a function of the distance between the walls (or the floor and ceiling) relative to the wavelength of sounds.

Small rooms are especially prone to bad room modes because they're often cube-shaped (unless they're long and narrow, in which case it's really a hall, and you should pitch in the extra rent for a real room and worry about home entertainment some other time). In cube-shaped rooms, the room modes between all the opposing walls and the floor and ceiling occur at the same frequencies and reinforce each other; the closer the room is to a being a cube, the worse the problem.

Though you cannot redistribute sub-bass modes in a room (a common misconception), you can alter the way the subwoofer couples to the modes—and improve matters—by moving it around. A good starting point is to put the sub where you most want to sit, walk around until you find the smoothest (not the loudest) bass sound, and put the sub in that place.

An assistant makes further experimentation easier. Whether you insist on hiding the subwoofer in a corner or not, an equalizer might be worth the investment. Use it to knock the response peaks down; leave the dips alone. Check out AudioControl's Richter Scale crossover/equalizer ($350). Its six half-octave bands are in the bass region only.

THE BIG BOUNCE

One can easily kill a season monkeying with surround speaker placement. In a small room, maybe two seasons. Small rooms may be the best environment for

Pint-Sized Projection: Mitsubishi's VS-4553 "tabletop" rear-projection TV.

dipole surrounds like THX uses, as they reflect most of their sound. If your budget doesn't support even the cheapest THX system, and you like the concept, affordable dipole and bipole surrounds are available from Atlantic Technology, Cambridge SoundWorks, NHT and Definitive Technology.

It is possible to achieve similar ends with direct-radiator speakers, like our bookshelf units, by bouncing the output off the walls and ceiling so you don't localize on them. Aiming the speakers upward and/or back at the rear corners will create a diffuse soundfield, so only reflected sound reaches the ears (here's where smooth off-axis response really matters).

Mounting surround speakers can be tough. Pivoting brackets distance them from the wall a bit (a plus) and allow for experimentation. Dolby has recently recommended mounting the speakers high on the walls to either side of the listening position, as you would dipoles, facing each other. If they're high enough (at least higher than a standing person's head), and the side walls are reflective, this should set up a lateral reverberant field which will be diffuse and will eliminate the sensation that the sound is coming only from behind you, a problem with the other arrangement.

continued on page 102

BY TOM HEALD

UNIVERSAL

We challenge 20 top remote controls to a multi-product A/V shootout

There was a day when remote controls were expensive extras that operated only basic functions. Today remote controls are necessary for almost everything except basic functions, although they'll run those too. Remotes are essential and so numerous they seem to multiply like lemmings. The top of my TV usually looks like it's been invaded by small beings. Typically, the only remote not present is the one I happen to need at a particular moment. That one's invariably disappeared, or playing hide-and-seek under a cushion. I even found a remote in my refrigerator one morning, as if it had wandered in looking for a snack after a movie.

What's the answer to too many remotes? Why another remote of course, a universal one able to replace several originals while still satisfying the videophile's desire for unlimited access to every component's full menu of functions. There's certainly no shortage of universals vying for your attention. We examined 20 models spread across 10 brands—Fox Electronics, Gemini, Gemstar, Jasco, Magnavox, One for All, RCA, Recoton, Sole Control and Sony—to find out which offer the best performance and the best values. In the process, we turned up a few winners and found some room for improvement.

The remotes we looked at were universals that come programmed with the device and function codes for virtually all major-brand video and audio components you're likely to own. They differ from learning remotes in that learners require you to transfer the infrared codes from your own remote, a time-consuming process that doesn't always work right the first time it's attempted.

The universals we examined were all capable of controlling at least three components. A couple also offer unique features, notably Gemstar's Control Tower, which can be programmed by new codes over the phone, and Magnavox's SmartTalk, which responds to vocal instructions. Otherwise, they fall

Control Central: Left to right, top: Universal Electronic's One For All VCRPRO8, the One For All 5 Upgradable and Jasco's Control 1 4 Device Big Button; bottom: three Control 1 models, the 6 Device Remote, the VCR Easy and the 8 Device Mega Memory.

TRUTHS

into one of three categories:

- No-frills models, priced from $20 to $30, that control the basic functions on a TV, a VCR, a cable box and, in most cases, one additional video device.
- Powerhouse remotes, priced from $30 to $60, that control six or more devices as well as all the functions on the remotes they're intended to replace.
- Powerhouse remotes, priced from $40 to $100, that include VCR programmers and small LCD screens.

GOING UNIVERSAL

What should you look for in a universal remote? Start with the keypad. It should be comfortable. Small, cramped remotes with lookalike keys are being replaced by well-differentiated units with unique key shapes, and it's about time. Since most of us watch TV in subdued light, large keys with unique silhouettes are a big advantage. There's no longer any need to settle for a remote that looks confusing. Size and balance are also important. Can you reach all the keys using one hand? Are frequently used keys clustered together? Does the remote have "transparent" keys that allow the TV's volume and mute functions to be run in cable or VCR mode?

Function keys are what separate the high-tech users from no-tech users. While some are in video-heaven when they can control everything from a single remote without the need to decipher small labels or deal with multifunction keys (let alone a manual), videophiles will fight to the death to preserve features like indexed search, slow motion, frame advance and other indispensable functions. Can a single remote make both groups happy?

To our surprise, we found that the answer is yes. Manufacturers are designing simple, easy-to-use universal remotes that also let users map special functions to specific keys. For example, in TV mode, VCR keys can be assigned extra TV functions; and in VCR mode, the volume, mute, recall and other TV-function keys can be used to control VCR functions.

The problem is there are more func-

Universal Sixpack: Left to right, top: Sole Control's Universal 1500, Recoton's Remote 6 and Gemini's Quik 30; bottom: Gemini's Quik 40, Smart 15 and Quik 50.

PHOTOS: DAN WAGNER

tions than keys. The traditional answer has been to add more dedicated function keys or generic keys labeled A to H. But today, many remotes borrow the idea of a shift key and use it to enter functions. The menu function might be mapped to S1 (the shift key followed by the number pad's 1 key), while the A/B switch might be mapped to S2.

The key to making a remote fully functional lies in the programming. Many learning remotes have already been replaced by coded universal remotes in which you simply enter a three- or four-digit code for each of your components. Typically, the codes are listed in a booklet that comes with the remote. For some remotes, each device code comes with a table showing how the original remote's functions can be mapped to the universal remote. All it takes is a few hundred key strokes.

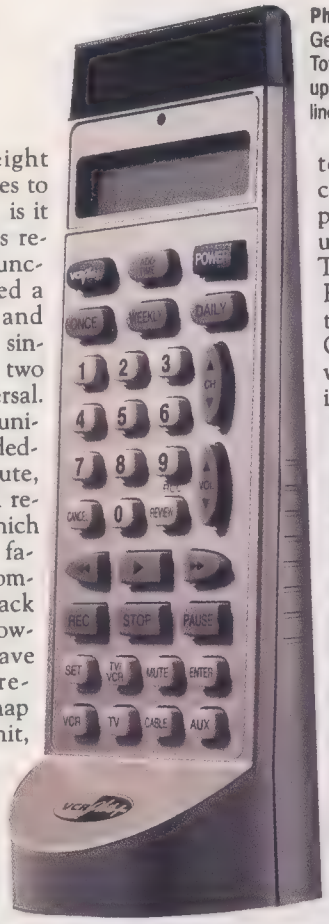
To simplify matters, and protect their research, some manufacturers no longer publish tables of function codes. Instead, they provide an 800 number to help map your favorite functions. But you still have to punch all those keys.

Except in the case of Gemstar. The company that gave us VCR Plus has a better way. The base of its Control Tower remote has a microphone that you use to program the remote directly over the phone. You answer a few questions about your equipment, hit two keys, and put the phone over the remote's microphone. The Gemstar computer looks up the proper codes for your equipment and programs the remote with beeps and squeaks. It worked so well that other manufacturers may have to adopt a similar system to remain competitive.

What do you do with a remote that doesn't have proper codes for your equipment? With an older remote, you set it aside and buy a new upgradable remote. It will probably be cheaper and more functional. However, most new remotes are upgradable. If it doesn't have a code for your present components or components you plan to buy, you can send it back to be upgraded at no cost. But sending it back and forth through the mail takes at least a couple of weeks.

While it's possible to map all the

All Systems Go: Left to right, top: Magnavox's Smart Talk VCR Voice Programmer, the Fox 4 Record and the Fox 600 EX; bottom: RCA's System Link 3, System Link 4+ and Sony's Universal Remote.



Phone Pal: Gemstar's Control Tower can take code updates over phone lines.

functions from up to eight original-equipment remotes to a single universal remote, is it practical? The problem is remembering where each function is mapped. You need a book just to list them, and functions that were on a single key may now require two or three keys in the universal.

Many people prefer a universal remote with a few dedicated function keys—mute, onscreen display, channel recall, enter, and so on—which they program with their favorite functions. For seldom-used functions they go back to the original remote. However, if you no longer have some of your original remotes, or you want to map every function to one unit, look for a replacement remote that has the dedicated keys you use most and use programmable shift keys for the rest.

TEST SETUP

The equipment we used to test the remotes consisted of two TVs, a VCR, three audio components and a cable connection. The primary TV was a 26-inch Mitsubishi CS-2655R that came with a remote containing a dozen keys for controlling special features and onscreen displays, plus an A/B switch for the antenna and cable box connections, and an external video input switch for shifting between the TV tuner and the VCR.

The VCR was an RCA VR680HF VHS model with numerous special features accessible only from the remote. Our secondary TV, the 20-inch Toshiba CE2058, was mapped to an AUX key on each remote control we tested. The cable converter was a Scientific Atlanta unit (model 8500321) from the local cable company.

On the audio side, we used a Technics SA-R277 stereo receiver, a Technics CL-PC10 CD player and a Technics SR-TR155 dual audio cassette tape deck. The original remote controlled all three components.

Most of the remotes we tested supported the basic keypad functions well. What separated the stars from the metoo's was the number of components they supported and their ability to use special function keys. The remotes from Univeral Electronics and Jasco did the best jobs overall. The One for All Upgradables were my personal favorites. They're great remote controls.

The models from Recoton and Gemini combined built-in codes with a learning mode allowing users to program special functions in some of their remotes. It's easier than calling an 800 number for the function codes, as long as you still have your original remote. Gemstar's Control Tower proved the easiest to program, but it has limited support for special functions. The RCA and Sony remotes supported fewer components and fewer special effects. But they were also among the least costly.

We also tested the range and spread of the infrared beam for each remote by trying each one at angles of about 30 degrees to either side, up to 10 feet away from our A/V system, with the VCR hidden behind smoked glass windows. The better infrared receivers used in today's equipment have sophisticated automatic gain controls and clocking circuits to help isolate remote signals from spurious infrared radiation, although this is not always the case (see "Phantom Frequencies," April). When a universal remote doesn't match the specifications for these circuits, its signal will appear weak and directional.

Most of the remotes worked well. When problems did occur, it was because a device code did not specify the proper center frequency or pulse width for the infrared signal, as we'll see below. All the remotes, except for the Sony Universal, retained their programming while we changed batteries. Here's how they stacked up in other areas:

ONE FOR ALL

Universal Electronics has a large family of remotes under the One for All banner. The top-of-the-line **VCRPRO 8** (model URC-6800; $99) has the potential to become the king of zap. Its clean, well-differentiated keypad has five special function keys. Eight devices can be selected from 14 types of equipment that include a full complement of audio and video components, satellite receivers, DAT players, phonographs and home automation products. Setup is quick and easy using built-in codes or a search mode. A two-line LCD display walks you through the process with an easy-to-follow menu.

Defining special-function keys is a snap. By calling One for All's 800 number I was able to map every function from each of my original remotes to the VCRPRO 8. Suppose you have a whole rack of equipment and you run the TV's audio through your stereo system? No problem, simply program the shifted TV power-on key to turn on both the TV and the stereo, then map the TV's volume and mute controls to the stereo.

Need more? It's also a 20-event VCR programmer. If you have one of those VCRs that you program on your knees, with your nose six inches from the display, this unit's for you. It does it

A/V Twofer: Sole's Dual-Sided Universal Replacement Remote has audio and video controls on separate sides.

VIDEO JOINS THE CLUB

BY SCOTT WASSER

Anyone who plays golf is well aware of the effect video has had on learning the game. But Les Unger, special projects manager of the United States Golf Association, has actually seen video alter the outcome of tournaments. "There are instances where somebody watching a telecast has seen a rules violation and gotten word to the officials by calling the network that was broadcasting the tournament," he says. "The officials, who didn't witness the action, were able to view it on videotape and assess penalty strokes."

This is one of the most dramatic ways video technology has affected the game of golf, one of the world's oldest and most traditional sports. But it's not the only way. For example:

- If you play the game seriously, you've probably had your stroke videotaped at a professional golf school or by a friend with a camcorder.
- If you watch television, you've probably seen advertisements touting commercially produced golf instructional videos.
- If you have a computer, you can play golf simulations, which are also featured at indoor parlors where real clubs and balls are used.
- If you're a total golf addict, you'll soon be able to tune into a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week golf channel, and access the extensive video archives of tournaments compiled by both the USGA and the PGA (Professional Golfer's Association).

"Seventy percent of what people learn is through visual means. Video allows people to see much more easily what's going on in their swings," says Scott Davenport, head teaching pro at the well-respected and high-tech Sea Island, Georgia/*Golf Digest* Learning Center. Davenport has been teaching golf for 16 years, so he has experienced teaching both with and without video. "What people feel and do are so different. Video helps bridge the gap between fact and fiction."

Chris Hodenfield, senior editor at *Golf Digest* magazine, illustrates the point: "Someone tells you you're coming over the top on your swing and you're sure you're not. The human body is very persuasive at times. But when you see yourself on tape, you know what they're talking about. It's hard to argue."

That's why the Learning Center makes extensive use of video. On the practice range, for example, a student's stroke is videotaped simultaneously from four different angles. Later, the teaching pro and the student can sit down and view the videotape in real time, slow motion or even a frame at a time. Split-screen analysis is also used, sometimes with all four angles of the player's swing shown at the same time to hammer home a point.

However, Hodenfield finds at least one possible drawback to golf instruction via video. "A lot of the professional players have started using video heavily, and that may be one of the reasons why there's a growing uniformity among players," he says. "Players in the '30s, '40s, '50s and even '60s were all different. But so many players today see themselves, whether it's on television or tape, that they all look the same. The swing has become homogenized."

The combination of golf and TV is "a natural," according to Bob Sutton, executive vice president of The Golf Channel, which plans to begin broadcasting in January. "Look at all the golfers in the country and around the world," he says. "I know it will work."

Sutton says The Golf Channel will broadcast tournament coverage from all the national and international professional tours, a nightly golf news report, and health, fitness and instructional programs. It will also replay classic tournaments and feature a home-shopping show Sutton hopes will snare a share of the $2 billion golf accessories market.

"For the first time, a golfer

will have a place to go to see just golf-related programming," says Sutton. "We're working on contracts for cable now. Some of the cable systems don't have the channel capacity to carry us immediately, but as soon as they do I'm positive we'll be on them."

While Sutton is selling his Golf Channel to cable television and direct satellite broadcasting companies, the producers of instructional golf videos have been pitching their products to him. He says he's "inundated with golf tapes that want to be on the air" and that instructional programs will occupy a lot of airtime. "Golfers love instruction," he says. "I know a guy who just spent $45 on three tapes and he already has about 50 others at home."

Some golf videos have been best-sellers. Among the most popular are *Golf My Way* with Jack Nicklaus, *Automatic Golf* and the *Bobby Jones Series*, which were created from instructional films reportedly made by the golfing legend during the 1930s. Jones was way ahead of his time. It has only been within the past decade that most golfers and golf instructors realized what a powerful teaching tool a video camera can be.

Many of the players who developed their swings before videotape became a teaching tool are still competing on the PGA Senior tour. Someone looking for an example of Arnold Palmer's classic stroke or Chi Chi Rodriguez's flamboyant post-putt gyrations can probably find it in the videotape archives the PGA or the USGA. One of Les Unger's primary responsibilities for the USGA is to catalog all the footage shot at its major tournaments, the U.S. Men's, Women's and Senior Opens.

"We review every second of tape we receive and log it into a computer using specific keywords," he says. "I can log it by time or code. I note things like the name of the person, the place—say a tee shot or a bunker—and describe the action. I get about 100 tapes from each of our tournaments and it takes me about 10 days to log one of our Opens. It's tiring work. Your eyes are constantly jumping around to three different locations. You're looking at a computer monitor, at a screen where the video is being shown and at another screen that's displaying time codes."

The precision with which he does his job, however, makes it possible to find a single moment in golf's seemingly endless timeline. "Before I started here in 1990, we had all of these tournaments (on tape or film) in storage, but nobody knew where anything was. Now we can find anything we want by the name of a person, a particular action or a specific event."

How video is fixing golfers' swings—and how you can use it to fix yours.

School On Screen: At Georgia's Sea Island Golf Learning Center, golfers study videotapes of themselves in slow motion and still frames.

Why? "Maybe a rule was broken," Unger continues, "and an official wants to review it. Or maybe there's a company that would like to use footage from the U.S. Open because a particular golfer is using that equipment or they just like that golfer and want to use him as a spokesperson."

And if someone wants to watch a bunch of great athletes competing in some of the world's most prestigious events, video helps the USGA provide that, too. "Video allows you to tape a golf tournament and condense it into video highlights that people can enjoy for years to come," Unger says. "We condense hours and hours of play over four days into a 55- or 58-minute video so that people can enjoy their favorite players or favorite tournaments whenever they like."

Computer simulations give people the ability to *play* golf whenever they like, even if there's three feet of snow on the ground. Aficionados can boot up one of the many golf simulations available for home computers and use a joystick or mouse to mash pixels portraying golf balls. Or they can drive down to an indoor parlor where they can use their own clubs to smack real golf balls against a computer-generated backdrop projected on a 20-foot screen. In both cases, video helps make the experience a realistic one.

The best PC golf simulation is Access Software's *Links 386 Pro*, which built its award-winning reputation on its ability to reproduce famous golf courses with incredible realism. Access marketing vice-president Steve Witzel says that kind of realism would not be possible without video. He explains that one of the first steps in recreating a famous golf course on a computer is to "go out and videotape every inch of that course. A guy goes out with a video camera and walks the middle of the fairway. Every 50 yards, he stops and does a 360-degree pan. It's a full day's job."

The video is then matched, frame-by-frame, with topographic information of the course that has been fed into access' computers. The video is digitized and combined with raw topographic

data to recreate some of nature's most beautiful handiwork on a 14-inch color monitor. A topography "engine" in the program makes sure all of the elements combine to produce a realistic simulation of what it would be like to play a particular course.

How realistic is it? "We can place a surface vertically within two inches of where it is in real life," Witzel says. "We can place a tree within a square-foot box of where it really is. We can generate what appears to be video from a helicopter flyby. But it's better than the real thing because we can fly anywhere we want. We can fly an inch off the ground or 50 feet above the ground."

That detail, made possible by video, has helped make *Links 386 Pro* a big success. Access, which has sold around 700,000 copies of various *Links* versions, believes that about 3 million people have played its photo-realistic golf simulations on home computers. "We get comments all the time about how realistic *Links* is," Witzel says. "We've gotten letters from people who have become paraplegics who say things like 'I've finally gotten my love of golf back, thanks to your program."

Computer Club: Golf simulation programs like Access Software's *Links 386 Pro* use extensive video footage of famous golf courses to achieve more realistic game play. The graphics from *Links 386 Pro* have been used in live-action golf simulators.

While the graphics from *Links* are not quite the same as looking at real video, they are realistic enough to be used by four different companies that produce real-action golf simulators. These simulators generate *Links* courses on 10-foot-diagonal front-projection screens that double as backstops for flying golf balls. Set up like game arcades for golfers, these facilities enable people to play a few holes or a complete round without ever moving off an artificial turf carpet.

The most sophisticated golf simulators use sensors to read the spin, speed and trajectory of a ball after it's hit. That information is digested by a computer that simulates the ball's flight on one of the *Links* courses and determines where it will land. "It's basically *Links 386 Pro* modified to accept input from an actual golf ball," explains Witzel. "Quite a lot of engineering went into it. We wanted to make sure that when the real ball hits the screen, the simulated ball takes off from that exact spot. The only thing missing is the breeze."

Golf video doesn't necessarily require thousands of dollars worth of sophisticated equipment. If you have a camcorder—*any* camcorder—it can be very effective as a golf instructional tool. Be sure to bring along a tripod. A light, inexpensive model will do, as long as it's not a windy day. It's best to bring along a helper, but it is possible to do everything yourself—just set up the camcorder, then try some test shots to get the right framing.

The only special shooting trick you need to employ is to use your your camcorder's high-speed shutter, which will let you get crisp stills and slow motion when you play the tape. A speed of about 1/4,000-second is about right, or if your camcorder offers auto exposure modes, use the high-speed shutter or sports mode.

If the course isn't crowded, you can shoot while you're playing. But if you notice a foursome bearing down on you, it's more polite to pack up the camcorder and head for the driving range, where you should have a much easier time getting unobstructed and uninterrupted shots.

For a basic video of your swing, shoot from the side (with the golfer facing you) and the rear. Frame the shot so that the golfer almost fills the screen. Get shots of the golfer using different clubs (which may affect his or her form, due to the short lengths of higher-numbered clubs).

When you view the tapes, use slow-motion or still frames to analyze your swing. Many 8mm and Hi8 camcorders don't offer slow motion or clean stills, in which case you should dub the tape to VHS (or S-VHS), and play it on a good four-head machine with frame advance or a jog/shuttle dial.

For Hodenfield, the warm breezes, lush foliage and beautiful sunsets often found on golf courses are among the things that make the sport so enjoyable. Unfortunately, his enjoyment has at times been tarnished by one of video's more intrusive impacts. The worst invasion of video in golf, he says, "are the golfers who go out on a course and videotape their own games. It always seems to happen when you're on one of those incredibly beautiful courses that you paid $200 to play on. As you're playing, you find yourself waiting longer and longer for the people in front of you. I feel like taking a bazooka to those people. What's kept us from writing about it is we're afraid of giving people the idea. We're afraid we'd see the video version of copycat killers."

Despite this singular example, video's effect on golf has been positive. In fact, it's safe to say that, for almost everyone who loves the game, video has breathed new life into the sport. ■

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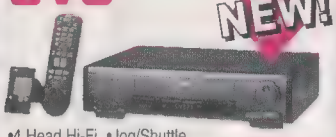

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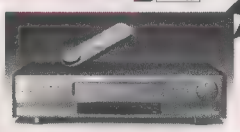

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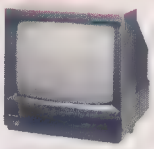

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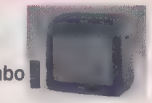

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SVP-9000	SVHS play only

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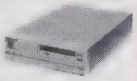

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BY JONATHAN TAKIFF

COMBINATION

What's new in laser players? Lots of models, prices & karaoke—our buyer's guide tells all

Is this the year you'll finally break down and buy a laserdisc player? Or move up to a more advanced model? Machines with newer features, like karaoke, are plentiful, prices are good and people like Marantz marketing manager David Birch-Jones believe that "laser is still the best kept secret in video." On the other hand, a few familiar brands aren't fielding new models this fall, and the latest research is fueling a gnawing fear that laser's day has almost gone.

But any predictions about laserdisc's passing are bound to be premature. While only one percent of American homes boast a laserdisc player, that still translates to 1.2 million machines, many owned by loyal laser afficionados—and 10 percent of Japanese homes have a player. Meanwhile, laser's appeal continues to grow. Last year, 280,000 players were sold here to consumers, and this year's tally is expected to be about 300,000. Virtually all were combi players that also handle audio CDs, and about 70,000 were karaoke models for sing-along fun.

The accompanying chart covers almost four dozen players from nearly 20 companies, at prices ranging from about $450 to $6,000. While there's something for virtually everybody, you won't find Philips among the players this year. The international giant whose Tennessee-based Magnavox division produced the world's first laserdisc player in 1978 has dropped its two U.S. models. Now Philips is pushing Video CD, the prerecorded optical format that uses MPEG-1 digital compression to pack 74 minutes of digital video, at near-VHS quality, onto one side of a CD-size disc.

Other "no shows" this fall include Hitachi, Sanyo and Sharp, all companies that recently fielded laser players. Some of the sideliners are "studying" the roll-out of Video CD, due this fall. Many more makers, including some laser stalwarts like Pioneer and Sony, believe there's more video potential waiting in the second generation of CD-sized discs, which will use MPEG-2 compression. "Everybody's working on it," says Brian Hoffman, Panasonic's national consumer video marketing manager. The goal is a disc with 135 minutes of video per side, with an S-VHS-quality picture and sound as good as the Digital Compact Cassette and MiniDisc formats.

"We used to always imagine such a product being 10 years away," says Sony Electronics home video executive Jim Bonan. "But nobody's saying that anymore." Pioneer has already

Budget Combi: Sony's $599 MDP-500, with auto-reverse and skip scan.

BUYING GUIDE

• BRAND	• MODEL	• PRICE	• AUTO REVERSE	• DIGITAL CLV EFFECTS	• KARAOKE	• CLV SKIP SCAN	• DIGITAL TBC	• JOG AND/OR SHUTTLE DIAL	• PROGRAMMABLE TRACKS	• LAST PLAY MEMORY	• INTRO-SCAN	• HEADPHONE JACK	• SPECIAL FEATURES
DENON	LA-2500	$700	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	20	Y	Y	Y	AV2, CDT, DYC, OO, SV
DENON	LA-3500	$2,000	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	20	Y	Y	Y	AF, AV2, DYC, GP, OO, JS2, SV
DENON	LA-2100	$850	N	N	N	N	N	N	20	Y	N	N	DCD, FD
DENON	LA-3100	$1,200	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	20	Y	Y	Y	DCD, TM
DENONET	LA-2150K	$999	N	N	Y	N	N	N	20	N	N	N	CDG, KC, VE, VEF, VR
EAD	T-8000	$3,950	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	24	Y	Y	N	AJ, DCD, DC, DNR, IF/SB, OO, PO, SV(2), Y/C
KENWOOD	LVD-320	$549	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	20	NA	Y	Y	LC, SV, Y/C
KENWOOD	LVD-820R	$899	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	20	Y	Y	Y	AV2, DCF, LC, SV, Y/C
MARANTZ	LD-510	$799	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	24	Y	Y	Y	CDT, Y/C
MSB	LS-1	$2,999	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	20	Y	Y	N	AJ, DKF, PO,TO, SV, Y/C
MITSUBISHI	M-V6022	$899	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	24	N	Y	Y	CF, OO, SV, Y/C
MITSUBISHI	M-V7025	$1,299	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	24	N	Y	Y	CF, ILR, OO, SV, Y/C
NIKKODO	LV-1500S	$598	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	20	N	Y	Y	AV2, CB, CF, DNR, GP, LC
PANASONIC	LX-H170	$449	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	20	Y	Y	Y	DCF, FD, GP
PANASONIC	LX-600	$800	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	20	Y	Y	Y	DCF, FD, GP, JS2, SV, Y/C
PANASONIC	LX-K750	$1,000	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	20	N	N	Y	AK, AM, CDGA, DMI, GP, KC, SV, TAR, VE, VEF, VR, Y/C
PANASONIC	LX-900	$1,100	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	20	Y	N	Y	AP, DCF, DYC, FD, JS2, SV
PIONEER	CLD-S201	$535	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	24	Y	Y	N	CDT
PIONEER	CLD-S303	$650	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	24	Y	Y	N	LC
PIONEER	CLD-M403	$770	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	60	Y	Y	Y	5CD, LC, SV, Y/C
PIONEER	CLD-D503	$650	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	24	Y	Y	Y	CDT, DCF, LC, SP, TM
PIONEER	CLD-D703	$1,220	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	24	Y	Y	Y	CDT, DCF, DNR, SP, SV(2), TM, Y/C
PIONEER	CLD-V750	NA	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	24	Y	Y	Y	AV2, DCD, CDT, HE, KC, OMT, VE, VR
PIONEER	CLD-V850	NA	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	24	Y	Y	Y	AV2, CDG, CDT, DCD, HE, KC, OMT, VE, VEF, VR
PIONEER	CLD-53	$850	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	24	Y	Y	Y	DCF,JS2, TM
PIONEER	CLD-97	$2,500	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	24	Y	Y	Y	AV2, PF, SV, Y/C
PIONEER	CLD-A100	$735	N	N	Y/O	N	N	N	24	Y/O	Y/O	Y	CDT, LA
PROSCAN	PLSD45	$599	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	24	Y	Y	Y	AV2, CF, JS2, OO, SV, TM, Y/C
QUASAR	LD510	$489	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	20	Y	Y	Y	DCF, FD, GP
QUASAR	LD600	$749	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	20	Y	Y	Y	DCF, FD, GP, JS2, SV, Y/C
QUASAR	LD700	$1,000	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	20	Y	N	Y	AP, DCF, DYC, FD, JS2, SV
RCA	LDR307	$499	N	N	N	N	N	N	32	N	Y	Y	2 audio outputs
RCA	LDR610	$549	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	24	Y	Y	Y	AV2, CF, OO, SV, TM
RUNCO	LJR 1	$3,995	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	20	Y	Y	N	AF, AP, BNC, DNA, DYC, FD, GP, OO, SV(2), TO
RUNCO	LJR 1 ST	$4,995	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	20	Y	Y	N	AF, AP, BNC, DNA, DYC, FD, GP, OO, PO, SV(2), TO
RUNCO	LJR 1 DA	$4,995	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	20	Y	Y	N	AF, AP, BNC, DA, DNA, DYC, FD, GP, OO, SV(2)
SAMSUNG	DV530K	$429	N	N	Y	N	N	N	32	N	Y	Y	DCD, DMI, VEF, TMI
SAMSUNG	DV530KV	NA	N	N	Y	N	N	N	32	N	Y	Y	DCD, DMI, VCD
SAMSUNG	DV730K	$539	N	N	Y	N	N	N	32	Y	Y	Y	CDG, DCD, KC, VE, VEF, VR, OMT, TM
SONY	MDP-500	$599	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	1	Y	N	N	DCF, QP
SONY	MDP-600	$799	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	25	Y	Y	Y	AV2, DCF, OO, QP, SV
SONY	MDP-750	$899	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	20	N	N	Y	AV2, DCF, LDM, OO, PF, QP, SV, Y/C
SONY	MDP-800	$1,199	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	25	Y	Y	Y	AV2, DCF, DPC, OO, PF, QP, SV, Y/C
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THETA	Data III	$4,500	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	24	Y	Y	Y	AJ, MPS, SV, TO, Y/C
TOSHIBA	XR-W90A	$800	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	24	Y	Y	Y	AV2, CDT, DCD, LC, TM, DYC, SV, Y/C
YAMAHA	CDV-870	$749	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	20	Y	N	Y	OO
YAMAHA	CDV-300K	$899	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	20	Y	N	Y	HE, KC, SP, TMI

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

Y: yes, feature present; **N:** no, feature absent; **NA:** not available; **(K):** karaoke feature; **Y/O:** yes, with optional LaserActive module. **SPECIAL FEATURES: AF:** art function; **AJ:** anti-jitter board; **AK:** auto key adjustment (K); **AP:** adjustable picture; **AM:** advice mode graphically helps maintain pitch (K); **AV2:** A/V outputs, 2 pairs; **BNC:** BNC composite video outputs, recessed; **CB:** chapter button; **CDG:** plays CD+Graphics discs (K); **CDGA:** plays CD+G discs with adaptor; **CDT:** separate CD tray; **CF:** comb filter; **DA:** custom digital-to-analog convertor; **DCD:** direct CD playback, bypasses video circuitry; **DCF:** digital comb filter; **DCN:** digital color noise reduction; **DMI:** dual mic inputs; **DNR:** digital video noise reduction, adjustable; **DPC:** digital picture call, stores images for later display; **DYC:** digital Y/C separation; **FD:** fluorescent display switch; **5CD:** 5-CD carousel; **GP:** glass lens pickup; **HE:** digital hall environments; **IF/SB:** isolating feet/stabilizer blocks; **ILR:** illuminated jog/shuttle remote; **KC:** key controller (K); **LA:** LaserActive, accepts game and karaoke modules; **LC:** auto level control (audio compressor); **LDM:** digest mode, scans laserdiscs at 1.5x, 2x speeds with intelligible sound; **MPS:** multiple power supplies; **OMT:** one-more-time key (K); **OO:** optical output; **PF:** digital picture freeze at end of side one; **PO:** professional outputs, ATT optical and digital AES/EBU with XLR connector; **QP:** quick play start/reverse, reads past table of contents; **JS2:** jog/shuttles on player and remote; **SP:** soft picture adjustment; **SV(2):** S-Video output(s); **TAR:** target mode, cuts off bad singers (K) **TM:** theater mode (a.k.a. film mode; turns off front display, fades image to black at end of side); **TMI:** twin mic inputs; **TO:** LD transport only, no D/A convertor; **VCD:** plays Video-CD **VE:** vocal eliminator (K); **VEF:** vocal effects by DSP (K); **VR:** voice replacement, restores master vocal when you stop singing; **Y/C:** analog Y/C separation

COMBI NATION

Sing Out: Panasonic's LX-K750 (top), Yamaha's CDV-300K (center) and Pioneer's CLD-M403 all include karaoke features.

shown a digitally compressed long-playing disc in Japan, along with the ultra fine "blue" laser that may be necessary to track it. Will the little disc's convenience triumph over laser's quality? Industry execs foresee a Video CD II format and today's 12-inch laserdisc coexisting nicely within a couple of years, possibly with combi players to handle both formats. "Today, all it takes to add Video CD to a player is three small chips," notes Birch-Jones.

Manufacturers are not taking these possibilities lying down. The laser corps, led by Pioneer, is working to enhance the format and maintain its supremacy in the home video arena. The next upgrade should be the addition of a discrete, digitally compressed, six-channel surround sound stream, delivering pinpoint accuracy and full-range fidelity from each driver. Digital surround sound could be buried on a disc in one of the two original AFM analog tracks without disturbing the current two-track digital Pro-Logic surround.

This would assure disc compatibility for most laser owners, although not early adopters with pre-digital machines. Dolby Lab's AC-3 discrete surround system is a leading contender, but is facing resistance from format guardian Philips, which favors using the compression scheme it invented for DCC. While an integrated circuit chip for decoding AC-3 could be developed by early next year, according to Kerry McCammon, Pioneer's vice president of home electronics marketing, other scene watchers predict that it could take years to standardize a new sound-coding format and the various features that would go with it, like a six-channel output/input jack set.

CHOOSING A PLAYER

In the meanwhile, there are many good reasons to flip for a laser player, including a library of 8,000 razor-sharp titles, many with such extras as letterboxing, AFM-track commentaries, trailers and director's notes. All of which brings us to the players themselves. Shoppers this fall should be prepared to discover premium features hovering in popular price zones.

Automatic double-sided play, achieved with a flip-over laser pickup, will be available in Pioneer, RCA and Sony models with street prices below $500. "Given the choice of a five-CD carousel or auto side-reversing, people vote overwhelmingly for the latter," says Patrick Deighan, VCR and laserdisc product manager for Thomson Consumer Electronics. "The perceived value is much higher."

Faster get-up and go is another feature you'll be hearing about. Sony boasts a new Quick Start/Quick Reverse system that gets the picture to the screen in 7.4 seconds, and switches sides in 8.7 seconds, a 40 percent improvement over the 11- or 12-second starts and flips of most players. "We think our new models overcome the two biggest consumer objections to the format—slow start-up time and the need to get out of your chair to flip the disc," notes Sony's Jim Bonan. Part of the trick, he admits, is simply instructing the laser to skip past the disc's table of contents. "The feature is defeatable," he says, "but we think most people will leave it on all the time." Meanwhile, Pioneer is claiming an eight-second turn time thanks to the lighter Gamma-Turn mechanism used in its CLD-D503 ($650) and CLD-D703 ($1,220) combi players.

Karaoke features, once limited to specialty players costing more than $1,000, are showing up in models as inexpensive as Samsung's $429 DV530K. "You get a combi player with a microphone, two microphone inputs with adjustable level, and a digital echo circuit

to make you sound better," says Knox. Basic karaoke features are also running through the four model Sony line and sing out in Pioneer's one-side play CLD-S303 ($650) and $770 list CLD-M403, not incidentally the only 5 CD carousel-combi now available.

For serious vocalizers, a couple of hundred more dollars buys laser karaoke players that can remove the lead vocal from an old recording (if it's mixed dead center), move the pitch up or down in quarter or half tone increments to fit your range, and enhance your performance with digitally processed hall environments.

Panasonic's LX-K750 ($1,000) promises the most fun at parties with unique features like Advice, which is a TV screen display that shows how your pitch compares with the prerecorded master vocal. Vocal sourpusses will get an automatic hook if the Target feature is engaged. This electronic talent scout also rewards singers with visual congratulations for staying on key.

The use of digital circuitry to improve performance is another part of this year's laser story. Digital time-base correction was once the strict province of broadcast equipment. Now it's used in many combi players to tame the subtle picture jitters caused by off-center or warped discs. You'll also find features like digital video noise reduction, digital dropout compensation and digital comb filters making the best of an already good situation by boosting video signal-to-noise ratios to a broadcast-quality 50 decibels.

Eight-bit digital field memories, available in machines costing at least $1,000, bring a variety of video tricks, like still and variable-speed slow motion, to long-play CLV discs. Of course, all combi players can do these stunts with 30-minute-a-side CAV discs, but CAV titles are fewer and costlier. Even without digital memories, many players can now skip-scan through CLV discs, with the strobe-like pictures appearing in color. Another nice touch, the last play memory feature, lets you shut off a disc in the middle, then resume playing in the same spot later.

On the audio side, one-bit digital-to-analog convertors (DAC) have migrated over from CD players, to raise signal-to-noise expectations to an astonishing 115 decibels, albeit perhaps with a little chicanery. "Feed a null signal to a CD player, as test equipment is designed to do when there's no disc in, and the DAC automatically mutes, shuts down," notes Mark Knox, Samsung marketing manager for audio and laserdisc products. "Feed a test disc which just has least-significant bit signal information to keep the DAC on, and you raise the noise floor 7 to 8 dB."

Before you contemplate a class-action suit, take heart. "Any signal-to-noise spec above 100 decibels means the hiss generated inside the machine will be inaudible to any and every person," says Birch-Jones. More useful in a combi player, he feels, is a direct CD playback feature, "which cuts off the video board and the nasty RF leakage potential." Standard audio CD features like multi-track programmability, random play, intro-scan previewing and CD-to-tape synchronized editing (among players sharing a brand) are almost givens.

For the golden of ears and wallet, a quartet of U.S. specialty houses—Enlightened Audio Designs (EAD), Runco, MSB and Theta—are making interesting modifications to high-end, auto-reverse combi players. These include things like replacing the stock DAC with a custom board, or pairing the laser transport with an outboard convertor, all of which adds $4,000 to $5,000 to the price. Naturally, these laser hot rods also promise the very best in video tweaking—look for reengineered signal paths, upgraded passive components and loads of extra shielding. ■

TECH TIPS

Once around

When renting a video, fast forward and rewind a tape before viewing it. In play mode, a VCR warms up and so does the tape; when it's rewound and returned in this condition, the tape had not been spooled evenly. Audio and video quality are better when the tape has been rewound cool. Johnny L. Reese, Boone, North Carolina

Calling All Tipsters

Do you know something we don't about VCRs, TVs, camcorders and other video equipment? We'll share it with our readers if you share it with us as a "Tech Tip." We'll also give you credit and a $25 bounty for each tip we publish. Tips should be informative and to the point. Please include your name, address and phone number. Send submissions to Tech Tips, *Video Magazine*, 460 West 34 Street, New York, NY 10001. ■

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HRVP618	Call	PV4461	Call
HRVP612	Call	PV4451	Call
HRJ610	Call	PV4401	Call
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PIONEER Laser Disc

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CLDD503	Call	CLDV720	Call
CLDM403	Call	CLDS303	Call
CLDA100	Call	CLDS201	Call

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UNIVERSAL

continued from page 53

all and it does it right. You choose which device selects the channel—VCR, satellite receiver, cable box, or any unit you have programmed. For externally selected channels, just tell the remote what channel your VCR should be tuned to. You decide whether the VCRPRO 8 should power-on each device before recording or whether you will leave them powered on. All this through a simple question-and-answer menu.

Sound too good to be true? It was. There were several problems. When I tried to program the VCRPRO 8 with the cable box's code of 017, the VCRPRO 8 hung-up and I had to take out the batteries to get it to work again. When programming the Toshiba as a second TV, none of the codes worked. It turned out the remote has a couple of software bugs, Jason Hanson, from Universal's support group, looked into the problems and sent a new, corrected remote. He said the bugs would be corrected in future units.

The **One for All 5 Upgradable** (model URC-2005; $24) controls five devices, including a CD player. Its well-differentiated keypad has uniquely shaped keys for easy identification. The five dedicated function keys were mapped correctly and I was able to add additional functions to both normal and shifted keys. It even has an automatic transmission. Pressing the scan key starts it surfing through all channels or up to 10 of your favorite channels.

Support for audio equipment requires one of the six- or eight-device upgradable remotes, which weren't available in time for our tests. However, the documentation and pictures show them to be kindred models. This whole family of upgradable remotes provides the best functionability for the price. I would plunk my money down for one.

JASCO

Jasco also offers a big family of remotes, which it calls the Control 1 series. The **4 Device Big Button** (model 8274; $29) worked well with the basic video components. Its four dedicated function keys were properly mapped, and Jasco's 800 service helped map other special function keys onto unused keys. However, there are no shift keys and it is not upgradable.

A big step up is Jasco's upgradable **VCR Easy** (model 8275; $69). It has a two-line LCD display with menus and event recording almost identical to the VCRPRO 8. One difference is the way it assigns shift functions to a key. The function you assign becomes the primary function and the original function shifts. For example, after programming a function to the 5 key, you must press shift, then press 5 to access channel 5 directly.

One way around this problem is to use the AUX device for extra VCR functions by programming it with the same code as your VCR. Then you can use the AUX number pad for functions and the VCR number pad for channel selection. This technique works for all remotes that have an AUX device and user-definable functions that replace keys' original functions.

Jasco's **6 Device Remote Control** model 8276; $44) has the same features as the 4 Device Big Button remote, plus it controls audio and CD devices. Using the manual, I was able to map all the devices' features to unused or shifted keys. The unit is not upgradable and the keypad is a little tight.

The **8 Device Mega Memory** (model 8263; $49) is upgradable and has the most comprehensive manual of the remotes we tested. All the keys were properly mapped with secondary mappings labeled in red (standard mappings

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are in white). However, Mega Memory has several big disadvantages—there's no way to change the mapping and many functions require three key strokes, which proved confusing and difficult to remember.

The built-in codes worked for all the equipment we tested except the Technics stereo. It turned out that the remote was not programmed with any audio codes even though the equipment codes were listed in the manual. If this remote had the same user programmability as Jasco's other units, and the missing codes were added, it would be a real winner but as it stands I can't recommend it.

GEMSTAR

The **VCR Plus Control Tower** (model CT-1; $59) from Gemstar Development Corp. is a four-device remote with VCR Plus programming built in. It has a single-line LCD that shows the date and time when the LCD is not being used to program the unit. The Tower's documentation is a fold-out card with the best set up instructions I've seen, but little operational information. It doesn't tell you how many events can be programmed (it holds 24) or that you must wipe out the code for the cable box to change channels from the VCR. If you connect your VCR directly to the cable feed to record one program, you can't use the same remote to select a different program on the cable box.

The ability to program its remote directly over your phone line is a huge advantage for Gemstar. Its computer sets the clock to your time zone, programs the codes for your equipment, and downloads the VCR Plus conversion codes that map the channels listed in your local newspaper or *TV Guide* to the channels used by your cable system.

At first, I encountered a few bugs. The cable box only worked when the remote was within two inches, and the VCR failed intermittently from four feet away. After talking to Gemstar on the phone and following its trial-and-error suggestions, the company downloaded new codes, tuned to the proper frequencies. At that point, the cable box and the VCR worked reliably from any position in the room. In all, I liked the Control Tower and recommend it for anybody who doesn't want to know about A/B switches and programming codes.

SOLE CONTROL

Sole Control's **dual-sided universal Replacement Remote** (model SC-2000; $69) is really two remotes in one with video functions on one side and audio on the other. With 104 keys, many common functions are mapped to dedicated keys. Secondary functions are mapped to 10 keys labeled A to J. It is definitely a two-handed remote, and I ended up using the eraser end of a pencil to press the tightly spaced keys. It mapped most video and CD functions, but it would not control the receiver or tape decks.

The **Universal 1500** (model SC-1500; $49) is a newer remote with more built-in codes and an improved keypad layout. Its codes worked for all the equipment tested, but did not map the menu or any special functions for the Mitsubishi TV. On the audio side, the remote shined. It mapped most functions for the receiver and the CD player, and provided more tape deck functions than the deck's original remote.

Also on the plus side, both units have A-H keys for special features and three lights to help with programming. A fourth light, indicating a weak battery, is a big plus. However, neither model is upgradable or user programmable.

RECOTON

Recoton's **Remote 6** (model 85106; $69) controlled everything except the cable box. Neither the built-in codes nor the learning mode worked on the box. I called Recoton's 800 service number and was told that the unit just doesn't work with some Scientific Atlanta cable boxes. The remote is not upgradable, so the only alternative would be to take advantage of Recoton's 30-day money-back guarantee and return it.

It's too bad because, otherwise, this is a good remote. The learning mode allowed me to map special features not programmed by the built-in codes. However, there were very few keys to map the VCR functions to unless the AUX device is used to map functions to the number pad.

The six-position sliding switch worked well when selecting different units; however, I prefer separate keys. Less convenient was the three-position programming switch inside the battery compartment. Its small size and awkward location made the remote more difficult to program than most of the other units.

GEMINI

Gemini's **Quik 30, 40 and 50 remotes** ($19, $22 and $44, respectively) are similar, four-device units with different keypad layouts. All three remotes had problems controlling the cable box. The number pad worked fine for entering channels, but the channel-down key went up and the channel-up key went south, causing the cable box to freeze.

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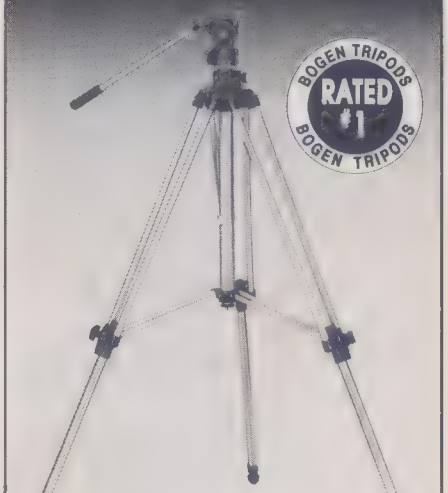

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The dedicated function keys worked except for the TV's A/B switch. The remotes are not upgradable and there's no way for a user to map functions to keys.

The **Smart 15** ($39) also controls four units and has both programmed codes and a learning mode. There is a menu key with up, down, left and right arrow keys along with a flash back (last channel recall) feature and TV/VCR, mute, and A-H keys for functions.

The keypad was a little cramped, but adequate for one-handed operation. The only feature I did not like was the way it selected the devices. There are four separate device keys for powering each component on and off. A separate mode key was used to select each device on a round robin basis by lighting an indicator above each device key. Most remotes use separate keys to select each device and provide a single power key, which I find preferable. It's not upgradable, but I recommend it as long as you keep your original remotes to teach it.

MAGNAVOX

The **Smart Talk VCR Voice Programmer** (model VP8000BK; $149) responds to your voice as well as your fingers. As with most voice-responsive devices, you have to train it to recognize your voice. When I did so, I found it very sensitive to the acoustics in the room. To achieve 90 percent reliability, I had to train it while sitting in the same seat from which I normally watch TV. All the spoken VCR controls worked well, but it had problems with numbers.

The manual controls are basic and only one special feature can be defined. The cable up/down switch controls the cable box if defined. Otherwise, it controls the TV. To select a channel on the VCR, you must go into event recording mode, set the channel and current date, and tell it to start.

Under voice control, you can only select start and stop times in half-hour increments. You can select any start time manually; however, you can only set stop times in quarter-hour increments. I found it cumbersome to set a program to be recorded daily or weekly, partly because different keys are required depending on whether you're instructing it vocally or manually.

The built-in menus and large LCD display make it easy to set up and teach it the basic controls from your original remote. All in all, I found Smart Talk more a novelty than a convenience. However, the model we tested is about to be succeeded by a new version, the VP8010BK, which was unavailable for our tests. It looks similar but comes with built-in codes, a $99 suggested price and, according to Magnavox, enhanced voice recognition.

FOX ELECTRONICS

The **Fox 4 Record** (model AF509; $39) is a basic four-device remote that can record up to four one-time events on your VCR. It did not support the cable box and the "0" key did not work in VCR mode. When the event timer started the VCR, it did not send a "0" before single-digit channel numbers. As a result, the VCR would time out and revert to the previously selected channel. Jerry Falasz, Fox's production development manager, assured me the remote sent the proper two or three digits for other VCRs and sent a replacement. It had the same problems.

The **Fox 600 EX** (model AF 506; $19) would not control the cable box either. Special functions were automatically mapped to shift keys; however, many of the important features like on-screen displays and switches were not mapped. Neither remote is upgradable or supports user-definable keys.

RCA

RCA's **System Link 3** (model RCU300; $24) is a basic three-device remote with four function keys. The channel control for the cable box ran continuously, at about eight channels per second, making it difficult to go to the next channel or stop on a specific channel. In TV mode the channel control worked fine, one channel per push, but the enter key did not work, making it impossible to go directly to a channel on the Mitsubishi TV.

The **System Link 4+** (model RCU400; $39) worked exactly the same. As a plus, it has different colored LEDs under four transparent device selection keys. There is a lighted custom key that lets you assign 10 channels to the number keys and allows them to be scanned via a single key. Both remotes came preprogrammed for RCA equipment and had above-average keypads.

SONY

Sony's **Universal Remote Control** (model RM-V11; $24) controls three devices and has four function keys. It had problems controlling the cable box and there is no light or other feedback to tell you a key has been pressed. It loses memorized functions when the batteries are changed. It is not upgradable and has no user-definable keys. ■

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Altar Egos: Grant and MacDowell, drawn together, apart and together In *Four Weddings and a Funeral.*

FEATURE FILMS

Four Weddings and a Funeral

1994. Hugh Grant, Andie MacDowell, Charlotte Coleman; dir. Mike Newell. Stereo. (R) 117 min. VHS priced for rental. LD $34.95. Polygram.

Bright and bubbly, Britain's *Four Weddings and a Funeral* recalls Hollywood's golden era of romantic comedies more than a half-century ago. This brisk tale chronicles the seemingly ill-fated romance of Charles (Grant), a cute, bumbling Englishman, and Carrie (MacDowell), an elusive American who's the woman of his dreams. Though chance encounters bring them together, bad timing breaks the spell. Both end up pledged to others, but of course, love overcomes all in this charmingly modern fairy tale.

Curiously, the central relationship is the weakest link. Few sparks fly between Charles and Carrie, in part because MacDowell comes off still and distant, perhaps intending to seem mysterious. It hardly matters: *Four Weddings* features a captivating group of supporting players as Charles' friends. It's testimony to the film's richness that one wants to know more about Charles' punky housemate Scarlett (Coleman); his unrequited admirer, Fiona; and the happy lovers, Matthew and Gareth. And whenever the airy plot falters, Charles manages to embarrass himself in public. Anyway, it's hard to dislike a movie that goes to great lengths to find a partner for every player, as if it would be rude to leave anyone unattached. **—Jon Young**

Blue

1993. Juliette Binoche, Benoit Regent; dir. Krzysztof Kieslowski. Stereo, subtitled. (R) 98 min. Priced for rental. LD $39.98. Touchstone.

Julie (Binoche), the sole survivor of a car wreck that claims her husband, a famous composer, and their young daughter, divests herself of every trace of her old life and lives in solitude. Finally, she realizes that to control her future she must understand her past.

Blue is the first of a "Three Colors" trilogy, loosely inspired by the symbolism of the French tricolor, by Krzysztof Kieslowski, a Polish director based in Paris. Here blue stands for liberty—Julie's search for a new life. The picture is sometimes emotionally precise, but often pretentious or obscure. The one constant is Binoche, a stunning personification of her character's moods. Just as Julie was a collaborator in her husband's music, Binoche seems the true *auteur* of this movie.

Oddly, *Blue* is being marketed as if it were some kind of sex thriller. It's a straight drama, and how you respond will depend on how you respond to Binoche. **—Sol Louis Siegel**

Juliette Binoche in *Blue*

EDITOR'S CHOICE

by

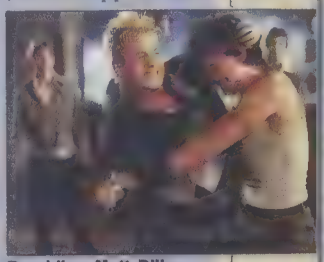
kenneth korman

Serial Mom

1994. Kathleen Turner,

"Nineteen-eighty-two was not an easy year for Francis Ford Coppola. It had only been 10 years since *The Godfather* n an honored place in but his career had maginable low. Thanks d surreal *One From the* found himself suffer- f critics and the indif- iences, and was near nancial ruin. Then he er from a high school California, calling his e wonderful teen nov- ton and suggesting he of Hinton's classic *The* ling to prove he could ke a commercial film d within a reasonable a decided to make the ning a "*Gone With the* en."

ocation in Tulsa, *Out-* t Dillon gave the di- of *his* favorite Hinton *Fish*, and Coppola de- ce n o- o- th ne t- e- s a- n-



Rumbling Matt Dillon.

prove his worth as an bly, he succeeded on MCA/Universal's new on of **Rumble Fish** stablishes this widely film as something of a e.

ting the movie, Cop- l great expressionist silent era for his cast how what he had in hat's why *Rumble Fish* en its characters don't llon, Mickey Rourke, per (himself on the il) and Nicolas Cage gh school) bring life to f youthful alienation, heric black-and-white nd Stewart Copeland's re the true stars of the *nble Fish* another try— n open mind. ■

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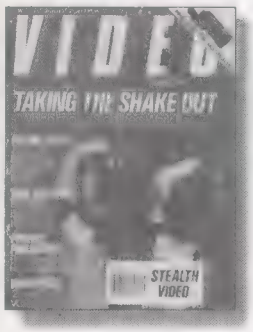

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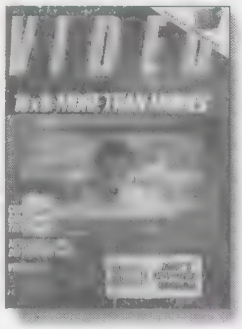

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TAPES & DISCS

Altar Egos: Grant and MacDo

FEATURE

Four Weddings and a Funeral

1994. Hugh Grant, A Charlotte Coleman; dir. M eo. (R) 117 min. VHS pri $34.95. Polygram.

Bright and bubbly *Weddings and a Funer* wood's golden era of ro more than a half-centu tale chronicles the se romance of Charles (bumbling Englishman, a Dowell), an elusive Am woman of his dreams. encounters bring the timing breaks the spe

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

kenneth korman

Grape Expectations: Depp bites Darlene Cates in *What's Eating Gilbert Grape?*

What's Eating Gilbert Grape

1994. Johnny Depp, Leonardo DiCaprio, Juliette Lewis; dir. Lasse Hallstrom. Stereo. (PG-13) 118 min. VHS priced for rental. LD letterboxed or pan-and-scan $39.95. Paramount.

What's Eating Gilbert Grape? Everything. Stuck in a tiny midwestern town where nothing happens, Gilbert (Depp) shares a rundown house with his two sisters, boisterous retarded brother Arnie (DiCaprio), and a miserable mom who's so overweight she can barely walk. To boot, Gilbert has a dead-end job at a grocery store and spends most of his free time trying to keep Arnie out of trouble. Even the occasional fling with a married woman (Mary Steenburgen) offers little pleasure.

Admirers of Lasse Hallstrom's *My Life as a Dog* will recognize his deft touch. Avoiding cuteness or melodrama, he renders Gilbert's odd, drab world with a matter-of-factness tht makes it all the more poignant. Though DiCaprio's flamboyant performance generates the most electricity, Depp is equally effective in his quiet way. His grave dignity offers fleeting glimpses of the frustration and anger torturing Gilbert, suggesting a depressed person desperately in need of salvation—which eventually arrives in the person of Becky (Lewis), a free spirit from out-of-town. While their blossoming relationship results in a more conventional film, the haunting sense of anguished longing lingers long after *Gilbert Grape*'s limitations are forgotten. **—JY**

Serial Mom

1994. Kathleen Turner, Sam Waterston, Ricki Lake; dir. John Waters. Stereo. (R) 93 min. VHS priced for rental. HBO.

If a farce about a celebrity murderer seems too real for comfort these days, credit John Waters' unerring instinct for capturing society's rank underside. Highlighted by a deliciously wild-eyed Kathleen Turner, the farcical *Serial Mom* blasts the myth of idyllic suburban life into tiny pieces. While the *Father Knows Best*-style nuclear family may seem like an easy target, Waters' campy vision puts the gaudy idiocy of pop culture as a whole on trial. Best of all, it provides plenty of serious belly laughs.

On the surface, Beverly Sutphin (Turner) seems like the ideal homemaker, a four-star meatloaf chef devoted to her dentist husband (Waterston) and kids Chip and Misty (Lake). When crossed, however, she turns homicidal, murdering the teacher who criticizes her son and the young hunk who rejects her daughter. Getting crazier by the day, Beverly eventually bumps off six people and attains national fame when she goes on trial. Along the way, everything from Herschel Gordon Lewis gore movies to Franklin Mint collectibles provides grist for the mill. Though *Serial Mom* suffers from erratic pacing and doesn't reach the inspired lunacy of his last work, the underrated *Cry-Baby*, Waters' eloquent bad taste still rings true. **—JY**

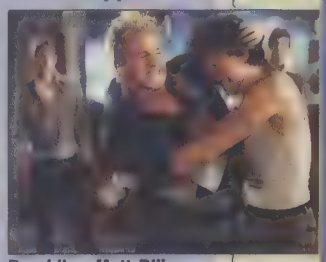
Far Away, So Close

1994. Bruno Ganz, Otto Sander, Nastassja Kinski; dir. Wim Wenders. Surround, cc. (PG-13) 146 min. VHS priced for rental. LD $39.95. Columbia TriStar.

Sequels are such a risky business, you wonder why any self-respecting filmmaker would risk one. Wim Wenders says he made a "continuation" of his beloved 1988 film *Wings of Desire* because he wanted to take another look at Berlin, which has undergone staggering changes in the intervening years. ■

"Nineteen-eighty-two was not an easy year for Francis Ford Coppola. It had only been 10 years since *The Godfather* had assured him an honored place in film history, but his career had reached an unimaginable low. Thanks to his lavish and surreal *One From the Heart*, Coppola found himself suffering the wrath of critics and the indifference of audiences, and was near the brink of financial ruin. Then he received a letter from a high school class in Fresno, California, calling his attention to the wonderful teen novels of S.E. Hinton and suggesting he make a movie of Hinton's classic *The Outsiders*. Needing to prove he could once again make a commercial film on schedule and within a reasonable budget, Coppola decided to make the movie, envisioning a "*Gone With the Wind* for children."

While on location in Tulsa, *Outsiders* star Matt Dillon gave the director a copy of *his* favorite Hinton book, *Rumble Fish*, and Coppola decided to make two Hinton films back-to-back on one location and with largely the same crew. *The Outsiders* would restore his commercial viability, and *Rumble Fish* would prove his worth as an artist. Incredibly, he succeeded on both counts. MCA/Universal's new laserdisc edition of **Rumble Fish** ($34.98) re-establishes this widely misunderstood film as something of a lost masterpiece.



Rumbling Matt Dillon.

Before starting the movie, Coppola screened great expressionist films from the silent era for his cast and crew to show what he had in mind. Maybe that's why *Rumble Fish* works best when its characters don't talk much. Dillon, Mickey Rourke, Dennis Hopper (himself on the comeback trail) and Nicolas Cage (fresh out of high school) bring life to Hinton's tale of youthful alienation, but the atmospheric black-and-white photography and Stewart Copeland's riveting score are the true stars of the show. Give *Rumble Fish* another try—all it takes is an open mind. ■

Clipped Wings: Ex-angel Sander meets Willem Dafoe in *Far Away So Close.*

Wings of Desire ended with the angel Damiel (Ganz), frustrated by his ability to do no more than observe humanity, falling in love with a circus acrobat and joining the human world. In *Far Away, So Close*, Damiel's friend Cassiel (Sander) makes the same leap with different results. He is drawn into an adventure involving fast cars, beautiful women, weapons, pimps and gangsters, that is almost a parody.

Aside from the central notion of angels watching the world of humans, Wenders tried to make this film as different as possible from *Wings of Desire*. Unfortunately, *Far Away* is just enough alike to disappoint fans of *Wings* without establishing a distinct identity of its own.

—M. Faust

Beethoven's 2nd

1993. Charles Grodin, Bonnie Hunt; dir. Rod Daniel. Surround, cc. (PG) 89 min. $24.98. LD $34.98. MCA/Universal.

"Puppies!"

One test of how you'll like this sequel to the hit canine comedy is to say the word out loud, preferably in a high-pitched squeal. Whether it makes you wince or brings a smile to your face will indicate whether this sequel is your bowl of Kibble.

In the second movement, our hero meets Miss, a pink-bowed mass of female fur and, thanks in part to lax leash laws, becomes the father of four. Human stars Grodin and Hunt are mere supporting players to this furball quartet, but they make their moments count. It's especially sweet to see them in brief scenes of tenderness, reassuring the audience that yes, Virginia, there are loving couples and unbroken families left in mass media.

A subplot also allows the teenage daughter to experience first crushes with boys both charming and caddish. The latter provides an unsettling moment—a vague implication of thwarted date rape—but most of the "action" is of a kid-appropriate cartoonish nature. Debi Mazar, as a New Yawk version of Cruella DeVille (she wants to sell, not wear, the puppies), and Chris Penn as her doltish boyfriend, shine in their stupidity.

All told, a charmer for (preteen) family night at the flicks.

—Marianne Meyer

The Ref

1994. Dennis Leary, Kevin Spacey, Judy Davis; dir. Ted Demme. Surround. (R) 97 min. VHS priced for rental. LD $39.99. Touchstone.

It's Christmas eve and cat burglar Gus (Leary) is forced to hide out for the night in the home of perpetually bickering suburbanites Lloyd and Caroline (Spacey and Davis). To make matters worse, Gus also has to deal with a Christmas visit from Lloyd's family—the cause of their arguing. This is the kind of comic premise, based on frustration and verbal aggression, that John Cleese is a master of. It should have been a good showcase for the snarling talents of MTV funnyman Dennis Leary. Unfortunately, the writers of *The Ref* do everything possible to defuse the potential for comic explosions. After some acerbic sparring, the script loses its way in strained sight gags and pointless subplots. Worst of all, it bogs down in domestic drama—a fatal mistake in a story where nasty, not nice, would have brought laughs.

—MF

I'll Do Anything

1994. Nick Nolte, Julie Kavner, Albert Brooks; dir. James L. Brooks. Surround. (PG-13) 116 min. VHS priced for rental. LD $34.95. Columbia TriStar.

James Brooks' first movie since *Broadcast News* was filmed as a musical about the struggle for love and employment in Hollywood. But when test audiences reacted poorly to the songs, Brooks yanked them and recut the film. While it's unfair to criticize a film in

Fit to be Tied: Spacey and Davis, angrier at each other than the thief who tied the knots in *The Ref.*

terms of what it might have been, knowing the history of *I'll Do Anything* helps to explain its off-center nature. It makes more sense when you know that the actors were preparing to burst into songs we never hear.

Like all of Brooks' work, *I'll Do Anything* features a gallery of unique characters, including Nick Nolte as an unemployed actor, Albert Brooks as a neurotic producer, Julie Kavner as a market researcher compelled to blurt out the truth, and Joely Richardson as a junior executive afraid to express her own opinions. There's really more material than James Brooks can fully deal with in one film, though the overstuffed result is appealing. **—MF**

TELEVISION

Stephen King's The Stand

1994. Gary Sinise, Molly Ringwald, Rob Lowe. dir. Mick Garris. Stereo. (NR) 360 min. VHS priced for rental. Republic.

If you're unhappy with this TV mini series adaptation of Stephen King's *The Stand*, tell the man himself—he wrote the screenplay. To this viewer, who confesses little familiarity with the horror-meister's works, it's confirmation of his prolific talent.

A deadly flu with a contamination rate of 99 percent spreads nationwide, the government lies, the military strong-arms the uneasy populace, and only a few citizens survive. Pure-of-heart survivors gather at the home of an elderly woman, while the bad guys head for Las Vegas to meet with a devil in denim.

This set-up for a showdown seems the PC equivalent of black hats and white ones, but King is too good a writer to leave it at that. The gradually unwinding plot rarely drags, characters reveal unexpected depths, and the flip of wild cards as a few folks switch allegiances make for popcorn-scarfing fun.

On video, sans commercials, eight hours of TV time shrinks to about six, and less is more when you consider the gore quotient of comparable theatrical films. Still, *The Stand* is as compelling and frightening as...well, a good Stephen King novel. As Armageddons go, it's fiercely entertaining. **—MM**

LASERDISCS

The Caine Mutiny

1954. Humphrey Bogart, Jose Ferrer, Van Johnson, Fred MacMurray; dir. Edward Dmytryk. Mono. (NR) 125 min. LD $39.95. Columbia TriStar.

Queeg: "There are four ways of doing things on board my ship. The right way, the wrong way, the Navy way and my way." These are the choices open to Ensign Keith (Robert Francis), an innocent used to doing things his domineering mother's way before service on his first ship forces Keith to think for himself.

When Lt. Commander Queeg takes over from Keith's easy-going first commander, he seems to Keith the perfect naval authority figure, but he soon turns out to have more than his share of imperfections. Bogart plays Queeg as a Frankenstein monster patched together from the unattractive aspects of other Bogart characters: the psycho twitchiness of his early villains and in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, the uncontrollable rage from *In a Lonely Place*, the cowardice Bogart showed at the end of *The Roaring Twenties*.

Authoritative, seen-it-all novelist and crew mate Fred MacMurray pegs Queeg as a paranoid personality. Keith and second-in-command Van Johnson, impressed by MacMurray's psycho-babble, follow his advice and end up on trial for mutiny, where Jose Ferrer steals the show as the cold, efficient lawyer who torpedoes Queeg in the courtroom, baiting him into exposing the full extent of his ballbearing-rolling neurosis.

So what's the message? *The Caine*

Mutiny's answer is to trust in your own authority and take responsibility for your own actions. This may seem to be a strange concept for a story about a warship in wartime, but authority in this film is consistently shown to be merely arrogance, self-importance and bluff. Those deserving respect are people like the old commander who, though sloppy, keep the ship and the Navy going with humanity, good sense and fairness.

—Josef Krebs

The Guns of Navarone

1961. Gregory Peck, David Niven, Anthony Quinn; dir. J. Lee Thompson. Digital surround, cc. (NR) 157 min. CAV sides 3 and 4. $49.95. Columbia TriStar.

War, what is it good for? Action-adventure movies, for one thing, and *The Guns of Navarone* is one of the most thrilling and least morally taxing. The Germans are little more than goose-stepping puppets to be eliminated by the carload as Peck leads a commando squad against two giant guns guarding a key strait in the Aegean Sea.

The characters may be cardboard—the stoic leader, the vendetta-minded Greek, the debonair explosives expert, the killer who's losing his nerve—but the action set pieces, in the assured hands of veteran director Thompson (*Cape Fear*) makes for superb disc viewing, especially in this widescreen version (2.35:1) newly transferred from restored film elements as part of Columbia's exemplary "Studio Heritage Collection." The Eastman Color has faded in places, but the image is sharp and clean.

Niven and James Darren in *The Guns of Navarone*.

Highlights are the group's storm-tossed landing on the fortified island, the nerve-jangling cliff ascent, the commandos' capture and escape, and the climactic destruction of the guns. The film's special effects won an Academy Award. Fans of other gloriously macho adventures based on Alistair MacLean novels, like *Where Eagles Dare*, will savor his usual plot twist involving betrayal from within. **—Andy Wickstrom**

War of The Worlds

1952. Gene Barry, Ann Robinson, Les Tremayne; dir. Byron Haskin. Digital stereo. (NR) 85 min. 3 sides CAV. $49.95. Pioneer/Paramount.

When Worlds Collide

1951. Richard Derr, Barbara Rush, Larry Keating; dir. Rudolph Mate. Digital stereo, (NR) 82 min., 3 sides CAV. $49.95. Pioneer/Paramount

These two classic early 50s sci-fi flicks lit up many a baby-boomer's afternoon, and they make an appropriate tandem release in newly minted editions. *War of the Worlds*, from H.G. Wells' story about a Martian invasion of Earth, is the more exciting of the two, with more impressive special effects, but both make worthwhile viewing.

When Worlds Collide, adapted from Philip Wylie's novel, tells of the struggle of a band of scientists to save a portion of humanity from Earth's impending collision with a rogue planet. The acting is stilted although engaging, with a good central performance by Richard Derr. The new film-to-tape transfer is vivid and bright, and the final reel, depicting Earth's destruction and the survivors' flight to another world, holds up well on repeated viewings.

War of the Worlds is laden with special effects. Martian ship landings (disguised as meteors), death rays, atomic explosions, and the destruction of Los Angeles look very impressive and are enhanced by freeze-framing and multi-speed viewing. The actors display a disarming earnestness, and the movie holds up extremely well.

Pioneer's mastering and pressing job makes its earlier extended-play editions obsolete. As a bonus, the discs includes the unmixed music-and-effects tracks on the alternate audio channel. Each disc is supplemented with the trailer for the other film. *War of the Worlds* also mistakenly includes a shot from *When Worlds Collide* on its back jacket.

—Bruce Eder

INTERACTIVE

(Formerly Prince) Interactive

Macintosh CD-ROM. $59.95. Graphix Zone/Compton's New Media, MPC.

Visiting this CD-ROM is a little like diving into the subterranean netherworld of the artist's Glam Slam club in Los Angeles, where, in fact, this title was premiered recently. It's a quirky, eccentric, outlandish, fantasy—but always compelling and full of wonder. Even if Prince, for lack of a better name, is not your favorite artist, you will be drawn to this title by its sheer creative power, execution and depth.

Yes, it has elements, that are reminiscent of other music-based CD-ROMs, such as artist factoids and audio/video re-mix manipulation exercises. But they are rendered in a way that hasn't quite been experienced before on other programs. You begin your journey into the artist's world in a *Myst*-like fashion as exceptional graphics and computer animation create a hypnotic 3-D-like virtual reality experience. Best of all, there's no text, icons or buttons. You just click ahead, "navigating" through a surreal Foyer, Studio, Library, Grand Hallway, Dance Club, Boudoir, Virtual Video Room and Candle Room

There are 11 "environments" and countless hallways, staircases and other satin tinged nooks, crannies and *objets d'art* to explore. And lots of audio and video treats, such as unexpected morphs, puzzles and games. The program's developers say it takes 10 hours to make one full pass through it. Audio is superb and loud, showcasing six songs as well as samples of tunes cut especially for this project, something we can expect to see more of as this new medium matures. matures.

There are also snippets of 52 classic

Grand Glam: Signifier and signified, formerly Prince, on CD-ROM screen from *(Formerly Prince) Interactive.*

songs, plus four full-length videos, including *Diamond and Pearls, Gett Off, Interactive* and the previously unreleased *Endorphinemachine*. No one is sure yet where "interactive music" or multimedia "expanded album" CD-ROMs are going, but this title brings the medium to a new level. Look also for an upcoming MPEG version, which will be the first interactive music CD-ROM to support MPEG video.

—Jim McCullaugh

SPECIAL INTEREST

Bluesland: A Portrait in American Music

1993. B&W/color. Leadbelly, Son House, Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon, Bukka White, B.B. King; dir. Ken Mandel. Digital mono/stereo. (NR) 85 min. VHS $24.95. LD $39.95. BMG.

Sweet Home Chicago

1993. B&W/color. Muddy Waters, Buddy Guy, Willie Dixon, Howlin' Wolf, Robert Nighthawk, Chuck Berry, the Rolling Stones; dirs. Alan and Susan Raymond. Digital mono/stereo. (NR) 60 min. $29.95. Pioneer Artists.

This is a bumper year for blues videos, as embodied by these two documentaries. Ken Mandel's *Bluesland* is the more ambitious of the two, covering the music's entire history in a dazzling assembly of video and audio clips. The performance footage of Leadbelly and Bukka White—the former in color, no less—is extraordinary. The Bessie Smith clip is heart-stopping. Alan and Susan Raymond's *Sweet Home Chicago* is devoted to Chicago blues and Chess Records, *Bluesland* takes a more scholarly, eloquent approach in the hands of host Keith David and interview clips with Albert Murray and Robert Palmer, range freely across the decades.

Bluesland's performance clips make it a bargain, and underscore the lot of the blues through most of this century—too many giants have left behind only photos as visual legacies. *Sweet Home Chicago* is more anecdotal but very lively, with enthusiastic contributions from Buddy Guy, Koko Taylor, Hubert Sumlin and Marshall Chess, among others. Despite Taylor's praise for the help given to Chess' artists by the Rolling Stones, Jagger and company seem out-of-place in both documentaries, although the footage of Howlin' Wolf on *Shindig*, as a special guest of the Stones in 1965, helps make *Sweet Home Chicago* indispensible.

—Bruce Eder

It's All True (based on an unfinished film by Orson Welles)

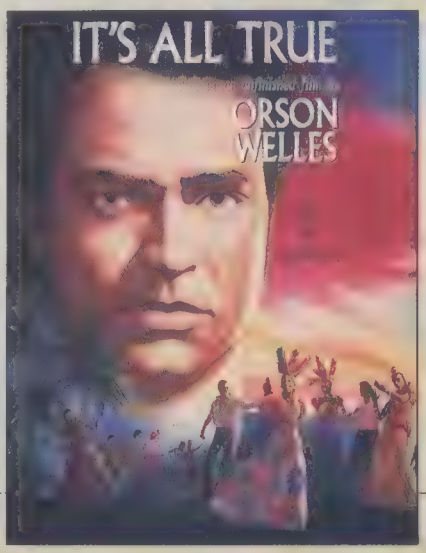
1993/1942. Color/B&W. Orson Welles, Richard Wilson; dirs. Welles, Wilson, Myron Meisel and Bill Krohn. Stereo, cc. (G) 86 min. VHS priced for rental. Paramount.

The banishment of Orson Welles from RKO after *The Magnificent Ambersons* is legendary, as is its tragic handling and near destruction. But this is only half the story. Welles' ill-fated *It's All True* is the other half, the title now part of a compelling documentary about its undoing, that utilizes Welles' footage.

Nelson Rockefeller and President Roosevelt persuaded Welles to go to Brazil in 1942 to make a film to strengthen cultural relationships as part of the Good Neighbor Policy. Rather than the expected prosaic travelogue, Welles devised a film that would present realistic glimpses of Brazil, focusing on the origins of Samba music and the plight of Jangadeiro fishermen.

Amid studio upheavals, poor previews of *Ambersons* and a prejudice against dancing "jigaboos," RKO pulled the plug on *It's All True* after months of exhaustive work. With only a little film left and no sound equipment, Welles completed his Jangadeiro segment in an enormously imaginative way, in the hope that he could finance the post-production work later on, a task that became a lifelong obsession. It was this sort of remarkable flexibility in the face of adversity that Welles was to demonstrate again and again on such projects as *Othello*.

—Bruce Lawton



HIGHLIGHTS

Bye Bye Birdie
1963. Ann Margret, Dick Van Dyke, Janet Leigh, dir. George Sidney. New widescreen presentation of this perky piece of early 60s musical Americana. Includes production essay. Surround. (NR) LD letterboxed $34.95. Columbia TriStar.

The Chase
1994. Charlie Sheen, Kristy Swanson; dir. Adam Rifkin. Hot shot and Buffy meet and fall in love on a long freeway car chase. Stereo. (PG-13) 88 min. LD $39.98. Fox-Video.

Chasers
1994. Tom Berenger, Erika Eleniak, William McNamara; dir. Dennis Hopper. *The Last Detail* for the '90s—the prisoner is a babe and it's a feel-good road comedy. "Rip-roaring." Surround (R) 100 min. VHS priced for rental. LD letterboxed $34.98. Columbia TriStar.

The Cheese Stands Alone
1994. Dir. Mike Wellins. Live action and animation shorts include *The Cook, His Teeth, Our Plumbing and Bubba, Triassick Parking* (new theme park opens with dinosaur parking attendents) and *Au Revoir Mon Frigidaire*. Mono. (NR) 87 min. Sensible Shoe Pictures (916-899-1262).

Dark Angel: The Ascent
1994. Angela Featherstone; dir. L. Hassani, prod. Vlad & Oana Paunescu. She-devil ascends to turn vigilante and get them while they're warm. From the makers of *Subspecies*. Includes *Videozone* magazine on tape. Stereo. (NR) 80 min. VHS priced for rental. Paramount.

Stars and Bars: Kirk Douglas awaits the grim reaper but gets a visit from Michael J. Fox in *Greedy*.

The Goldwyn Follies/They Shall Have Music
1938/39. Color/B&W. Adolphe Menjou, Jascha Heifetz, Joel McCrea; dir. George Marshall (*Follies*), Archie Mayo (*Music*). George Gershwin died during the production of Follies, but he left the movie such hits as "Love Walked Right In" and "Our Love is Here to Stay" (lyrics by brother Ira). Choreography is by George Balanchine and script by Ben Hecht. Both films are photographed by Greg Toland and have essays by historian Miles Kreuger. Mono. (NR) 220 min. LD $79.95. Pioneer.

Greedy
1994. Kirk Douglas, Michael J. Fox, Nancy Travis; dir. Jonathan Lynn. Comedy of bad manners from the writing team that Created *City Slickers, Parenthood* and *A League of Their Own* (Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel). Surround. (PG-13) 113 min. VHS priced for rental. MCA/Universal.

Hard Boiled
1992. Chow Yun Fat, Tony Leung. dir. John Woo. Gun smugglers, mobsters, dead cop's partner, vengeance, blood 'n bodies, bang-bangs, boom-booms, John Woo. Love him or leave him. Mono, dubbed. (NR) 127 min. VHS only, $92.98. Fox Lorber.

The Oak
1993. Maia Morgenstern, Razvan Vasilescu; dir. Lucian Pintilie. A woman starts an affair with a man she meets on the road while the communist world collapses around them in Romania. Mono, subtitled. (NR) 105 min. New Yorker.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
1937. White, Queen, Dopey, Sleepy, Sneezy, Grumpy, Bashful, Happy, Doc; supervising dir. David Hand. Some day my prints will come, restored. Box set includes *The Making of Snow White*, lithographs of theatrical posters, book, etc. Stereo. (G) 84 min. LD CAV $99.99, movie only $29.99. Disney.

continued on page 92

BY JOSEF KREBS

Labels For Less

Summertime, and the viewing is easy: Fun films for late nights, early-rising kids and family affairs. Paramount releases Python—*Live at the Hollywood Bowl* and *Life of Brian*. Also *Soap Dish, Frankie and Johnny and Indecent Proposal*, each reduced to $14.95. For the kids who refuse to get grow up and get serious, Columbia TriStar brings down *Hook* to $14.95 and Disney reduces D2: The Mighty Ducks to $19.99.
MCA/Universal helps you get into the swing of summer with *Star Spangled Rhythm* ($14.98) and its Bing Crosby collection—*Rhythm on the River, Here Come the Waves, We're Not Dressing* and *Emperor Waltz* ($14.98 each or $49.98 the set). If too much lazing in the heat gets you in the mood for some action it also has *Hard Target* for $19.98, and *Repo Man, Madigan* and *Midnight Run* coming at you for $14.98 each. Finally, for the end of that long day, when the heat's making it hard to sleep, MCA/Universal has *Halloween II* and *III* ($14.98 each) to send you off into a peaceful slumber party massacre. —JK

Monty Python's Life of Brian

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VR 672HF	OSD, VCR PLUS, INDEXING	CALL
VR 610HF	OSD, 181# CHANNEL	CALL
VR 603HF	HI FI STEREO, OSD, BILINGUAL	CALL
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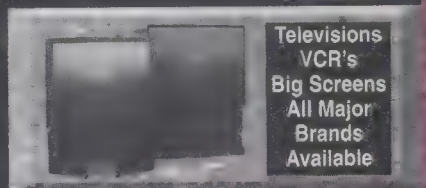
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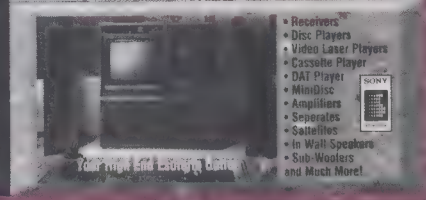

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PV-IQ 404 PV-IQ 504
PV-43 PV-54
PV-S64 PV-900
PV-910 PV-S770
AG-196 AG-186
AG-455 W/case AG-460 W/case
AG-3P W/case AG-W1

Mixers
WJ-AVE5 WJ-AVE7
WJ-MX30 WJ-MX50
WJ-AVEI AG-A96

VCRs
PV-2401 PV-4401
PV-4451 PV-4461
PV-S4366 PV-S4380
AV-4462 AG-1970

AV Laser
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LX-101 LX-K750

Video Printers
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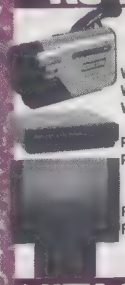

Camcorders
VHS-C CC740 CC604 CC600
VHS CC547 CC413
8mm Pro845 Pro843

VCR'S
VR-721HF VR-538 VR-674HF VR-578
VR-672HF VR-507 VR-610HF VR-503
VR-603HF combo's T2005BK T13005BK

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HR-J610 HR-VP606 HR-S6900

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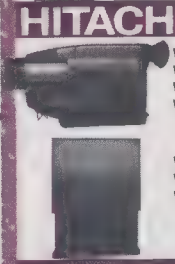

Camcorders
VM-352 VM-H59 VM-1700
VM-E54 VM-H71 VM-2700
VM-E56 VM-H38 VM-3700
VM-E58 VM-H39 VM-S8200 W/case
W/case & light

VCRs
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Yamaha's DSP-A2070 Amp: Lucky Seven

The new DSP-A2070 Integrated Amplifier from Yamaha is the ultimate in home theater sound power. The main and center channels are served with 80 watts each and the rear effect channels are driven with 25 watts.

Back in 1986, Yamaha engineers developed Digital Sound Field processing. A "sound field" refers to the unique acoustic character of a specific environment: a jazz club, a stadium, a concert hall. By devising a special way of measuring sound fields, these acoustic engineers were able to make precise measurements of some of the world's most famous performance venues. This data, encoded on computer chips, made it possible for music lovers to enjoy the sound of jazz clubs, such as New York's Village Gate, to spacious concert arenas, like California's Anaheim Stadium. Imitators soon followed with their own DSP, standing for Digital Signal Processing. Same letters, different sound. These other makers merely added electronic effects to imitate the sound of cathedrals and concert halls, whereas Yamaha DSP reproduces the genuine sound characteristics of the real things.

And Yamaha also created the next major breakthrough in sound processing for the home theater; Cinema DSP. This achieves the "impossible." With Cinema DSP, you're not just watching and hearing a movie, you're right in the middle of the action. When the guns start shooting, you'll duck. When the plane roars overhead, you'll look up. And you'll hear every bit of dialog with exceptional clarity.

The top-of-the-line DSP-A2070 seven-channel integrated amplifier has incredible versatility and amazing capabilities. It offers sound field processing capacity so its 11 Cinema DSP and 12 Hi-Fi DSP modes deliver realistic sounds.

Extensive audio and video inputs and outputs make the unit ready for any home theater.

Built into the unit is Yamaha's new YSS-213 LSI, which carries out all the Dolby Pro Logic and surround decoding digitally for the highest possible decoding accuracy. A special 19-Bit-Equivalent A/D system provides exceptional signal linearity and a 114 dB dynamic range.

Other notable features include: front, center and rear level controls, front mix on/off switch for 5-channel amplification, pre-main coupler, dynamic bass extension, heavy duty chassis and a learning remote.

For more information, call (714) 522-9105.

Yamaha DSP-A2070

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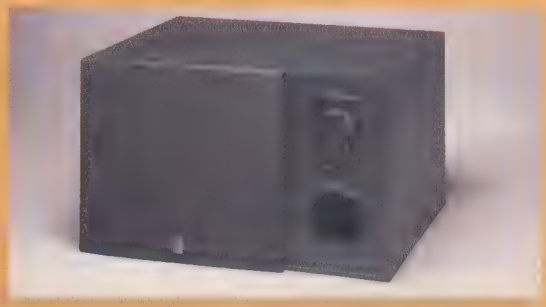


Cerwin-Vega HT-10PWR

Cerwin-Vega, a leading American manufacturer of loudspeakers, has introduced Powered System 6, a six-piece Sensurround system, featuring a low-profile center-channel speaker, four satellites, and a powered subwoofer with remote control.

The compact Sensurround System 6 features the same Academy Award-winning Sensurround technology offered in Cerwin-Vega's popular seven- and five-piece home theater systems. As with the original introduction into the home theater market, Cerwin-Vega's newer, streamlined Sensurround Powered System 6 delivers uncompromising sound for video and audio applications.

The new slim-line HT-MDC center-channel speaker is magnetically shielded and is a two-way affair. The HT-S5 two-way satellite speakers feature a 5-inch midrange and a 1-inch dome tweeter. The HT-10PWR is a 10-inch powered subwoofer with remote control. Its infrared volume control code is compatible with all universal remotes. The HT-10PWR subwoofer's front panel features a motor-driven Volume Level Control, as well as Variable Crossover Control on the back panel that permits easy adjustment of crossover points from 80 Hz - 150 Hz.

All Cerwin-Vega Powered System 6 speakers are offered in a black woodgrain vinyl finish with black knit grilles. Visit your dealer or call (805) 584-9332.

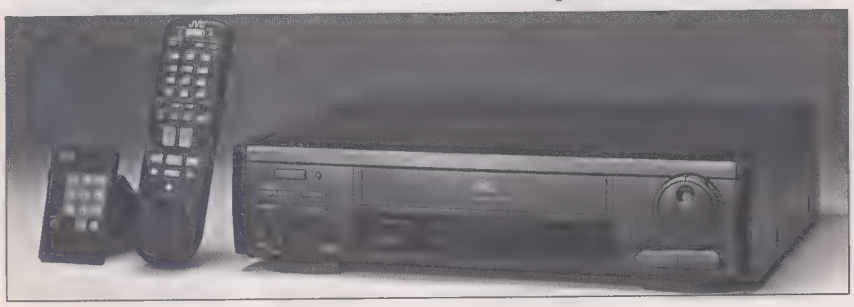
Compact All-In-One Set

Goldstar's new GCT-2515S comes with a built-in closed-caption decoder, random access remote control, 25-inch diagonal high contrast color picture tube for natural color images and finer detail, a cable-ready 181 channel, electronic stereo tuner system with English/Spanish on-screen and channel displays, auto program for fine tuning of all available cable and air channels and auto picture control to reset the picture back to factory preset levels. Other features include channel return, an auto demonstration function and a 240-minute sleep timer. The unit also comes with a 2x2.5-watt amp magnifying the audio signal out of two speakers, audio/video and RF inputs. The GCT-2515S comes in a grey cabinet design and costs $549.95.

Goldstar GCT-2515S

This is Home Theater!

The new HR-VP710U is a top-end VCR that sets new standards for home theater. Both audio and video performance are among the best of any consumer VCR thanks, in part , to JVC's exclusive new Hi-Spec Drive Mechanism.



JVC HR-VP710U

The HR-VP710's four oval-cut video heads lay the foundation for the unit's incredible picture quality. Hi-Fi stereo provides near-CD quality audio, and is a prerequisite for any home theater system. This VCR also offers JVC's AV Compu Link, allowing it to perfectly interface with other JVC components in your home theater system. And when it comes to user-friendliness,

AudioQuest Brings It All Home

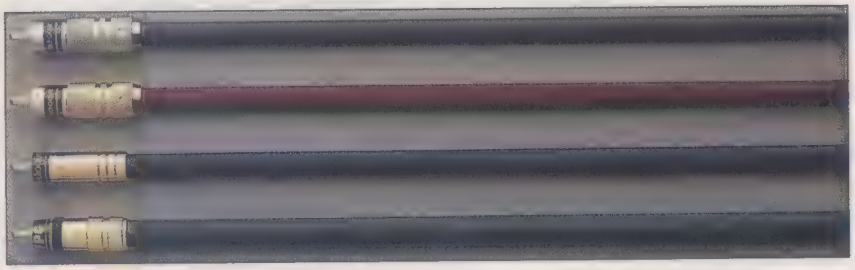
Cables are often classified as only "accessories." This is not true. An audio/video system will not work without cables. Furthermore, an audio or video system can only perform as well as the sum of its components, and cables are very important components.

On the face of it, nothing could be easier than simply getting a signal from here to there. The truth is, each stage of a home theater system performs a very complicated task. Each must transform or transfer a multi-octave complex signal without changing any part of the information carried in that signal. AudioQuest has spent over a decade researching and designing cables that bring music and pictures to your ears and eyes unchanged from the original performance.

Each AudioQuest cable, from the least expensive to the most costly design, has been engineered to be the best possible cable for every application and budget.

When considering an inexpensive upgrade to your home theater system, arrange a "test-drive" of Turquoise audio interconnects and Video X cable. The Turquoise interconnects ($39/meter) will allow a new level of sonic dynamics and emotion clearly showing the difference between home theater and regular TV. The Video X cable ($35/meter) will allow improved video contrast and resolution, letting you appreciate the subtleties of fine cinematography.

There are only a few basic distortion mechanisms that account for the large variations in cable performance. AudioQuest publishes a pamphlet on cable theory that explains in simple terms more about how cables dramatically effect the sound and picture quality of your system. The pamphlet also describes how each AudioQuest model solves basic cable problems. For a complimentary copy of AudioQuest's "Cable Design" booklet, call (714) 498-2770 or write P.O. Box 3060, San Clemente, CA 92674.



AudioQuest Cable

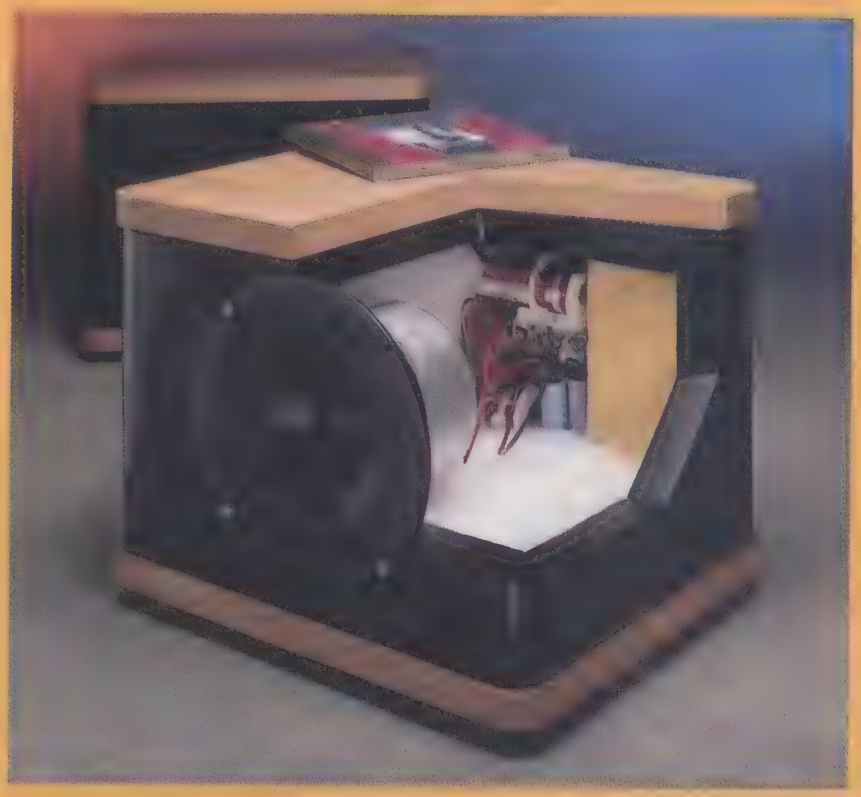
the HR-VP710 is very helpful. First, it features VCR Plus+ programming, which makes programming as easy as dialing a phone. And cable box control is included for added convenience. In addition, a well thought out on-screen menu system guides you easily through all functions.

For simple, yet versatile home editing, JVC has provided Random Assemble Editing to make the removal of unwanted material or the rearranging of scenes a snap. The flying erase head ensures glitch-free edits, while the audio dubbing allows narration or music to be added after the recording is made. Gold-plated front AV inputs make the hook-up of external components easy, while the VCR remains in its home theater space. A large jog/shuttle dial allows the user to easily navigate their way through any tape — even frame by frame. There is also a large jog/shuttle located on the full-function multi-brand remote. Other features include variable input level controls, dual audio level meters and video dubbing. The rosewood side panels complement the cosmetic appeal of the HR-VP710.

For complete details visit your local JVC dealer.

Vandersteen's Live Center

Vandersteen Audio doesn't spare any design innovations or quality when building their high-end loudspeakers. Vandersteen speakers feature boxless, phase correct designs that are very important in multi-channel A/V surround systems. Most conventional speakers have at least one of their drivers wired out-of-phase from the other driver or drivers. Although each speaker may sound good individually, the haphazard mix of phase characteristics prevents them from presenting a coherent soundfield when they are mated together. All the drivers in Vandersteen speakers, including the woofer and tweeter in the new VCC-1 center-channel speaker's aligned coaxial driver, are connected in the same phase. While this is an advantage in an audio system, it's absolutely critical in a multi-channel A/V surround system where the front, center and surround speakers must all work together to convey the emotional experience of a film. Vandersteen Audio manufactures a full line of high-performance loudspeakers and subwoofers for optimum music and A/V sound reproduction. For information on the new VCC-1 and the rest of the line, call 209-582-0324.



Vandersteen Loudspeakers

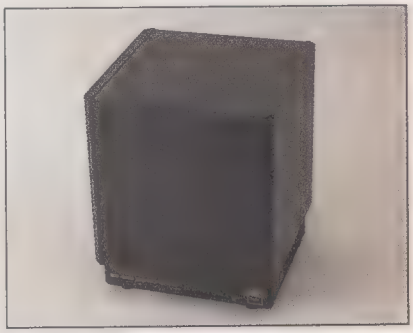
AMC System 2 Preamp and Amplifiers

State Of The Art Home Cinema

AMC's System 2 can easily turn your existing audio/video components into an extraordinary home theater. System 2 is comprised of a professional edition Dolby Pro Logic preamplifier, two audiophile-quality amplifiers and a unique powered subwoofer. For slightly higher cost than the price of a top-end A/V receiver, the System 2 is by far the better choice.

System 2 is flexible and powerful enough to allow you to use your existing speakers or upgrade or add new speakers as needed. System 2 has been designed to handle most types of loudspeakers and, most importantly, match them properly. System 2's preamplifier has built-in special calibration circuits allowing you to balance all six speakers' sound pressure level to within 1 dB of each other. This very special adjustment feature is simply not available on any other competitive design in this price category or, for that matter, models costing several times more.

System 2 is also extremely powerful, with all the reserve power needed to reproduce the explosions, as well as faithfully reproduce the soft whispers and musical scores of today's films. Low noise and smooth and powerful response for each and every channel, coupled with quick distortion-free bass means you will immediately hear better detail, more separation and impressive dynamics. Voices will come distinctly from the screen and bass will fill the room while your side speakers create a panoramic effect transforming even the smallest of living rooms into a theater.



AMC System 2 Subwoofer

In creating System 2, AMC's first design priority was to engineer a professional edition Dolby preamplifier. By optimizing each critical circuit, System 2's ultra-low-noise preamplifier guarantees every movie soundtrack is reproduced without distortion. Although this might seem obvious, these distortions are actually commonly found in entry-priced home theater components.

The ultimate result is that with System 2, you can play your favorite films' soundtracks in state-of-the-art Dolby Pro Logic or, when needed, offer decorrelation for stereo signals. The System 2 preamps will be upgradeable to THX-controller status.

The powered subwoofer produces frequencies below 80 Hz, it's small enough to blend into any room, yet it will rattle the pictures if you want it to.

System 2 is easy to operate and set up, and it's expandable.

For more information, contact AMC at 1-800-321-6396.

The Home Theater Power Source

Energy loudspeakers are the perfect choice for video connoisseurs with discerning ears. For the ultimate in home theater audio satisfaction, the sonically identical RVS-1 and RVS-2 are high-performance, bookshelf-size models that are available separately or as a package. These new RVS models provide balanced performance for the left, center and right channels in perfect sync with the video presentation. Additionally, the RVS-1 center-channel speaker may be positioned horizontally either atop or beneath a video screen. The new RVSS combination dipole/bipole surround speaker blends naturally with the RVS-1 and RVS-2 for superb home theater effects.

Since deep bass is a vital part of every home theater system, Energy offers two powerful active subwoofers. The 90-watt AS-90 and 180-watt AS-180 both feature 12-inch woofers, a phase-reversal switch to overcome troublesome room acoustics and an audio/video mode selector. The Video mode adds impact to deliver thunderous bass to add dramatic realism to movies, and the Audio position ensures smooth response for superb reproduction of your favorite music.

Visit your nearest Energy dealer to audition these loudspeakers.

Energy RVS-2

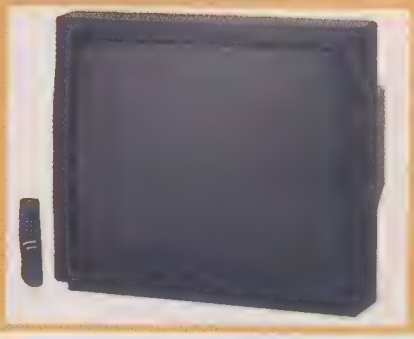
Big Screen, Big Features

In JVC's new line of color televisions is the 31-inch AV-31BP5. The unit's Super Command universal remote puts the power of microprocessor artificial intelligence at your command to give you the super fast, super efficient control over the enormous array of advanced features the set has to offer. It has scrolling on-screen menus that take you through its functions quickly and easily. When you see what you want, you simply move the cursor right or left to activate your choice.

On the Full Square Super Dark tinted picture tube, you enjoy 700 lines of horizontal resolution for superb picture quality.

The set has a built-in MTS/SAP decoder and stereo amplifier for optimum audio. It also offers matrix surround sound processing and has front-firing stereo speakers. Dynamic artificial intelligence and Black Level Expansion further enhance picture quality. Advanced functions include two-way picture-in-picture with freeze frame. Other features include Hyper Scan for high speed channel changes (scans channels up or down at a rate of five channels per second), Your Favorites Ai (analyzes your viewing habits and remembers your three favorite daytime and nighttime channels), Category Preview, Theater/AV Status, Mute Level Preset, AV Compu Link for perfect interfacing with other JVC home theater components, Live Effex, 180 channel tuner, child timer, 16 jack input/output panel and external speaker terminals.

The 31BP5 comes in an attractive dark grey cabinet.



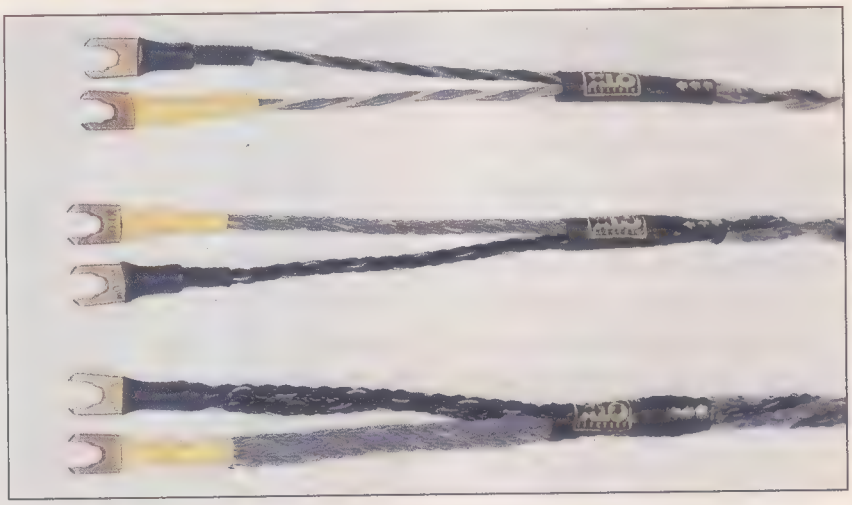
JVC AV-31BP5

Get Wired

XLO/VDO offers a complete line of high-quality audio and video cables designed to maximize the audio and video quality of your home theater.

The line includes models specifically designed for certain applications. The ER-10 AC Power Line is a heavy-duty power cord that actually improves A/V performance. Its double-shielded and double-grounded 12AWG design works to eliminate EMI and RFI problems.

Model ER-12 is speaker cable that offers outstanding midrange and treble clarity, as well as phenomenal bass performance. It's ideal for single-cable bi-wiring and subwoofer applications. The ER-12 features 9AWG OFHC conductors (in shotgun mode) and special patterning for unobtrusive application. It's available in pairs or subwoofer singles.



XLO ER-14, ER-11 and ER-12

ER-14 Speaker Cable for side and rear channels offers imaging and spatial characteristics similar to other XLO/VDO cables for maximum surround sound effect. It features 14AWG multi-conductor design and the same unobtrusive patterning as ER-12 cables. All XLO speaker cables are available with XLO spades, pins, or banana plugs.

Contact XLO at (909) 466-0832.

Videonics' Top Titleist

Videonics' TitleMaker 2000 will make your videos more professional-looking than you thought possible. Your personal productions will complement your home theater experience. The TitleMaker 2000 is a high-resolution video titler that offers a host of new and exciting features, as well as those that have made the company's original TitleMaker the most popular titler in the home video editing market.

The TitleMaker 2000 offers 92 font and size combinations, including script fonts, that can be displayed over video or colored backgrounds. An additional "Preview" video output allows you to work with a second monitor.

TitleMaker 2000 has a great memory too. A set of independent pages can be saved for different jobs. Each project is protected against accidental changes while other projects are in use. With its rapid access, you can go to a specific page or project instantly without having to scroll through every page of titles. The advanced scrolling capabilities allow you to scroll in from one direction and scroll out another with (if you wish) a user-set pause in between.

In addition, TitleMaker 2000 offers background, letters, outlines and borders that can be created with over a million colors or a wide range of patterns, including animated patterns. Shadows, outlines and other character enhancements can be added to the letters and titles being changed.

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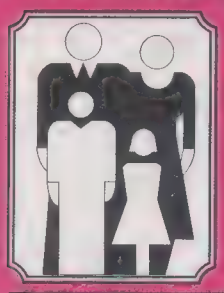

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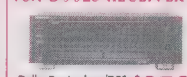

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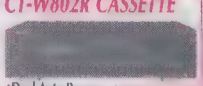

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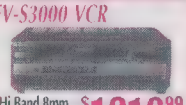

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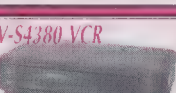

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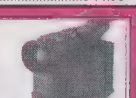

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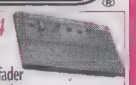

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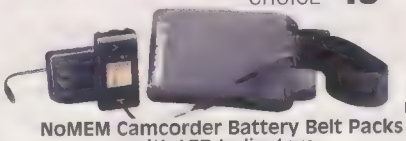

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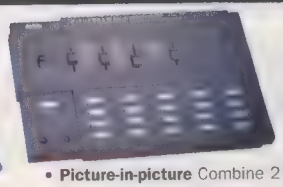

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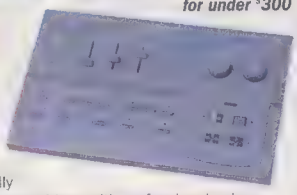

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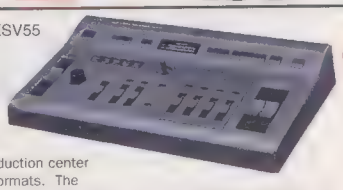

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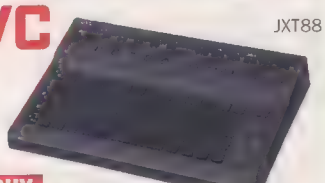

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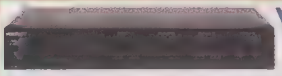

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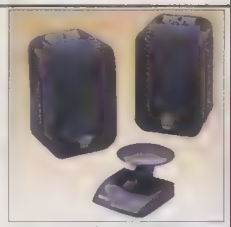

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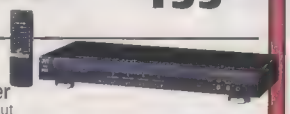

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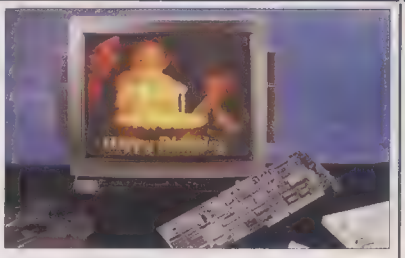

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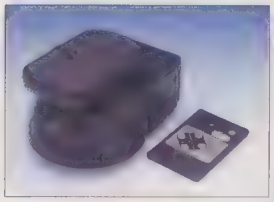

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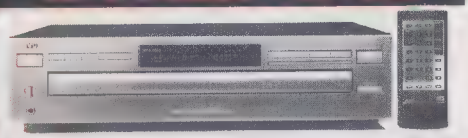

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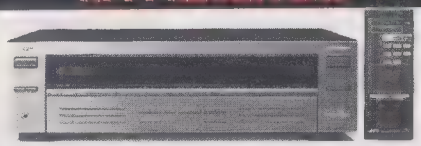

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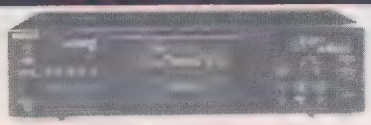

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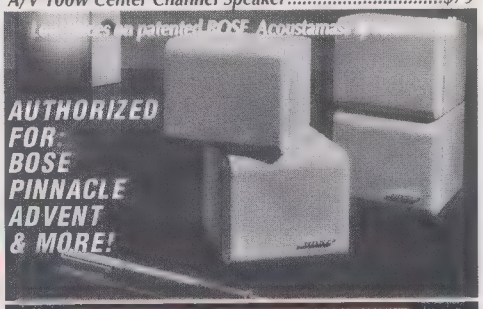
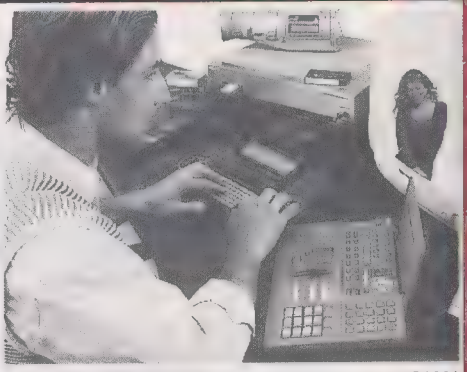


VIDEO PROCESSORS



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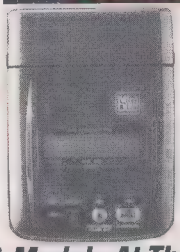

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Song Without End
1960. Dirk Bogarde, Capucine; dir. Charles Vidor/George Cukor. New to laserdisc, traditional Hollywood-style biopic of Liszt with Oscar-winning score (for a livelier alternative see Ken Russell's *Lisztomania*). Stereo. (NR) 130 mins. LD letterboxed $39.95. Columbia TriStar.

Street Wars
1994. Alan Joseph, Bryan O'Dell; dir. Jamaa Fanaka. "What doesn't kill them, makes them stronger." Top gun takes over murdered brother's drug operation and shows 'em how the military does it. Mono. (R) 90 min. VHS only, $89.95. Triboro.

Thriller
1960-62. Boris Karloff, William Shatner, Elizabeth Montgomery; dir. various. Boxed set of six once spine-tingling TV tales. Mono. (NR) 300 min. LD $89.98. Columbia TriStar.

Throne of Blood
1957. B&W. Toshiro Mifune; dir. Akira Kurosawa. Samurai Shakespeare: True to the source, yet completely Kurosawa, with a stunning set-piece finish. Mono. (NR) 105 min. LD $49.95. Criterion. (Earlier Criterion CAV version $89.95.)

The Woman Next Door
1981. Gerard Depardieu, Fanny Ardant, Henri Garan, Michele Baumgarner; dir. Francois Truffaut. Successful, happily married man goes out of control when former lover becomes neighbor and passion re-ignites. Mono, subtitled. (NR) 106 min. LD $49.95. Criterion.

Wrestling Ernest Hemingway
1994. Robert Duvall, Richard Harris, Shirley MacLaine; dir. Randa Haines. Old Irish sea salt rousts retired Cuban barber out of his complacency and reinvigorates his relations with the opposite sex. Stereo. (PG-13) 123 min. VHS priced for rental. LD letterboxed $39.98. Warner.

LASERDISC

The Complete Showboat
1994. Howard Keel, Ava Gardner, Paul Robeson, Irene Dunne, Allan Jones, Howard Keel, Kathryn Grayson; dir. James Whale (1936), George Sidney (1951). Package uniting Technicolor version, earlier Robeson Showboat, and footage from "lost" 1929 version of the Kern-Hammerstein musical, all previously available in two supplement-crammed laserdisc sets. Mono. (NR) 360 min. $124.98. MGM/UA.

The Creature Collector's Set: Creature From the Black Lagoon/Revengeof the Creature/The Creature Walks Among Us
1954-56. B&W. Richard Carlson, John Agar, Jeff Morrow, Julie Adams, Richard Denning, Antonio Moreno; dirs. Jack Arnold (*Lagoon* and *Revenge*), John Sherwood (*Among Us*). Finally the full trilogy; bummer if you bought the recent $59.98 MCA/Universal set of just *Revenge* and *Among Us*. Mono. (NR) 240 min. LD $44.98. MCA/Universal.

Judy Garland: The Golden Years at MGM: The Harvey Girls/Summer Stock/The Pirate
1994. Gene Kelly, Cyd Charisse, Ray Bolger, Walter Slezak, Gloria de Haven; dirs. George Sidney (*Girls*), Charles Walters (*Stock*), Vincente Minnelli (*Pirate*). Technicolor restoration boxed set includes excerpts, outtakes, pre-recordings, stills and plenty of Judy. Mono. (NR) 414 min. LD $124.98. MGM/UA.

On the Town
1949. Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Vera-Ellen, Jules Munshin, Ann Miller, Betty Garrett; dir. Stanley Donen/Kelly. Revolutionary Comden and Green musical with all concerned at their peak. Academy Award-winning Bernstein score. Mono. (NR) 98 min. CAV LD $59.98. MGM/UA.

Repulsion
1965. B&W. Catherine Deneuve, Ian Hendry, John Fraser; dir. Roman Polanski. Lonely sex-starved girl in swinging London gradually loses her sanity. Freaky. Includes audio commentary by Polanski and still library. Mono. (NR) 105 min. LD $99.95. Voyager.

The Universal Studios' Collector's Set: Dracula/Frankenstein/The Wolf Man
1931-1941. Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Lon Chaney, Jr., Hellen Chandler, Dwight Frye; dirs. James Wale ('*Stein*), Tod Browning (*Dracula*), George Waggner (*Man*). Boxed set of the originals. Mono. (NR) 216 min. LD $44.98. MCA/Universal.

SPECIAL INTEREST

The Best of Broadway Musicals
1994. Nar. John Raitt. dir. Andrew Solt. A taste of the musical performances that made Broadway legend. Includes interviews with Rogers & Hammerstein, Lerner & Loewe and original show-stoppers by Julie Andrews, Richard Burton, Carol Channing, Anthony Newley, Pearl Bailey and Ethel Merman, etc. Mono. (NR) 56 min. VHS only, $19.99. Disney.

Boop Ooop A Doop
1986. Tinted/B&W. Cab Calloway, Helen Kane, Rudy Vallee. Nar. Steve Allen, dir. Vernon Becker. Documentary on Max Fleischer's greatest discovery—Betty Boop. Includes the screen debuts of Popeye and Louis Armstrong. Mono. (NR) 74 min. VHS only, $19.98. Ivy Classics.

A Change of Heart
1994. Dirs. Sally & Eric Taylor. Ram Dass, formerly Dr. Richard Alpert, Harvard psychologist, colleague of Timothy Leary and author of *Be Here Now* teaches the value of service to others. Mono. (NR) 60 min. VHS only, $29.95. Mystic Fire (800-292-9001).

The Columbo Series
1967-77. Peter Falk; dir. various. Includes *Murder by the Book* directed by Stephen Spielberg and pilot episode *Prescription Murder*. Mono. (NR) 73-76 min each tape, pilot 99 min. VHS $14.98 each tape. MCA/Universal.

Pathways
1994. Dir. Thomas Walters. Highly acclaimed excercise video for people with limited mobility, including those with MS, arthritis, seniors and the overweight. Mono. (NR) 48 min. VHS only, $29.50. MobilityLimited (800-366-6038).

Surviving Your Parents Divorce: It's Never Easy
1993. Dir. Matt Clark. With the majority of marriages ending in divorce, this much-needed how-to tape teaches techniques for coping with feelings, communication problems and financial woes. Mono. (NR) 35 min. VHS only, $79.95. Cambridge Educational (800-468-4227).

The World's Greatest Animation
1994. Includes animation cells, career bios and audio commentary by animation experts. Stereo. (NR) 105 min. CAV LD $99.95. Criterion.

Ranma 1/2 The Movie 2: Nihao My Concubine
1994. Dir. Rumiko Takahashi. Sort of a Japanese-animation, martial-arts, sex-comedy version of *Gilligan's Island*. Mono, dubbed. (NR) 60 min. VHS only, $34.95. Central Park Media.

DRAMA

Dersu Uzala
1975. Maxim Munzak, Yuri Solomon; dir. Akira Kurosawa. Wonderfully humanist film based on the writings of Vladimir Arsenyev. Academy Award-winner—Best Foreign Film. Stereo. (NR) 140 min. VHS letterboxed only, $39.95. Kino.

CAMCORNER

continued from page 26

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AG-455
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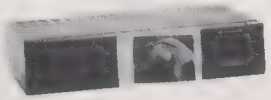
AG-195
VHS Camcorder with Digital Special Effects, 8x Zoom lens with 2 speeds, Digital 12x or 100x zooms,Digital Speical Effects like wipe, fade, strobe and mix.

Panasonic
EDIT SYSTEM

AG-1970 AG-1970 AGA96

S-VHS/VHS editing, insert and assemble edit, Hi-Fi Stereo sound. Jog shuttle search, and Multiple programmable edits

Panasonic
AG-EP60



COLOR VIDEO PRINTER
Capable of making prints from VCR's, Camcorders, Cameras, TVs and Computers. Split print features can produce passport photos.

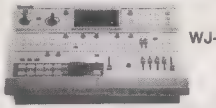
Panasonic
AG-7650H /AG-7750H /AG-A770

SVHS editing system w/built-in digital TBC & noise reduction for excellent multi-generation dubbing quality, 4 CH of audio/on, screen menu for set-up and data, RS-422 controller has 128 event memory, auto-tag and split editing for fast and accurate editing (+/-0 frames accuracy w/TC)

Panasonic

DS-5050 DIGITAL PROCESSING CAMERA
3 fit CCD camera package 750 lines res. for excellent picture quality, SVHS docking recorder with amorphous heads for improved picture quality and long life, complete w/ shotgun mic and carrying case. (Lens optional)

Panasonic



WJ-MX50
Digital special effects switcher with 4 Y/C and/or composite inputs, 287 digital effects, 4 channel audio mixer w/ balanced XLR/line level audio inputs, chroma & luminance keyer, 2 channel color corrector. Also available WJ-MX30 and WJAVE-5.

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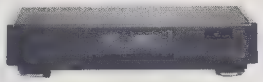
AG-3 WORLD'S SMALLEST 3 CCD CAMCORDER
Built-in digital TBC, digital signal processing, digital noise reduction for luminance, digital field NR for chrominance, manual iris, digital wipe, mix, still/strobe, snapshot.

Panasonic
AGW1

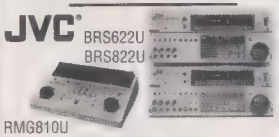


Multi standard VCR w/built-in standard converter, plays & records PAL, NTSC, SECAM & other international formats.

JVC
GYX2U

One piece camcorder 3 CCD Camera with full size S-VHS recorder built-in, very low light 3 lux, 13x or 17x optional lenses.

JVC



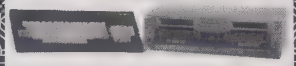
BRS622U
BRS822U
RMG810U

PROFESSIONAL EDITING SYSTEM
S-VHS insert and assemble editing. 4 channel audio, optional plug in time code and TBC's.self diagnostic warning system, automatic head cleaning,on screen menu display. Recorder has built-in single event recorder.

SONY
EVW-300

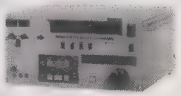
3 CCD/HI-8 CAMCORDER
One piece camcorder, very portable, High Density 1/2" IT CCD's AFM HiFi recording, 1.5" Viewfinder, Hi8 Time Code, Auto trace white balance. Please call for a detail brochure.

SONY
EVO-9720



HI-8 EDIT SYSTEM
Single unit with built-in play and record VCR's,Assemble & Insert editing, S-Video In and Out connectors. Jog shuttle, dial search at19x the normal speed. Call for detail brochure.

SONY



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U-Matic & U-Matic SP video players and recorders in stock for immediate delivery. Some of the model numbers we stock VP-7020, VP-7040, VP-9000, VO-9600.

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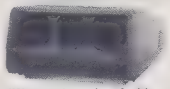
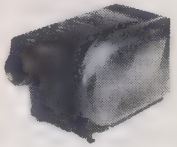
We carry different size 8" to 32" video monitors with 400-600 lines of resolution. Some of the models we stock: PVM-5041Q, PVM-1390, PVM-1341, PVM-1344Q, PVM-2030/BS.

VIDEO/DATA PROJECTORS



Several different brands of video and data projectors available. Please tell us your application and we will recommend one suitable for your needs.

LCD PROJECTORS



We carry Sanyo and other name brand LCD video/data projectors. Please inquire for current model numbers and pricing.

FutureVideo

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Featuring the EC-1000 "Pro Mk II" w/a built in RS-232 port for computer control. Hrs., min., sec., frame display. Reads RC time code. 8 scene memory. Compatable w/ control L&S VTRS and Panasonic AG-1960/1970.

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UC-S3. . . . . CALL
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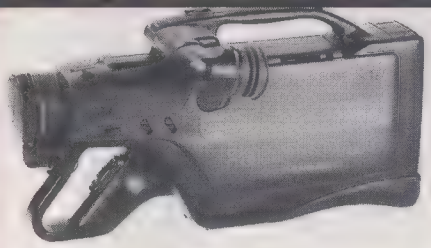

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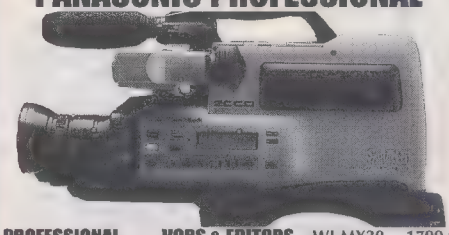
PV-910.	CALL	PV-IQ403 . .	639.99	PV-S372. . . .	799.99
PV-900.	CALL	PV-IQ303 . .	529.99	PV-362	599.99
PV-810	549.99	PV-IQ203 . .	614.99	PV-IQ204. . . .	CALL
PV-800	509.99	PV-803	969.99	PV-IQ304. . . .	CALL
PV-760	779.99	NEW PV-64. . . .	CALL	PV-IQ404. . . .	CALL
		PV-53	849.99	PV-IQ504. . . .	CALL
				PV-IQ604. . . .	CALL

PANASONIC PROFESSIONAL



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VM-H38A CALL

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VM-H57A. . . . . CALL We carry the full Line!

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CC-174 . . . CALL
PRO 930 . . CALL
PRO 883 . . CALL
PRO 840 . . CALL
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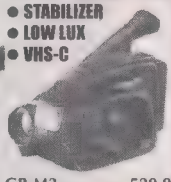

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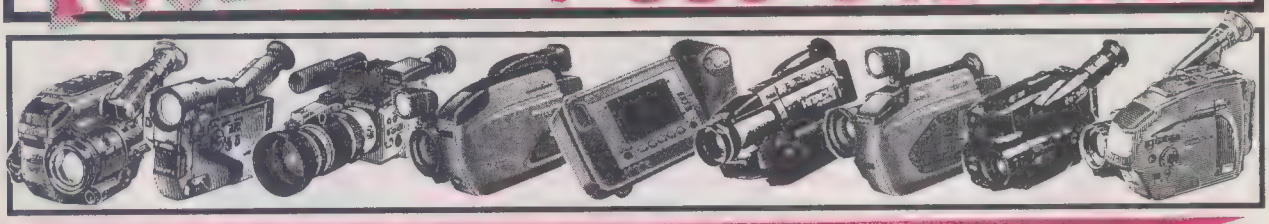

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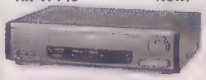

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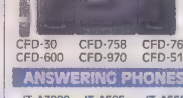

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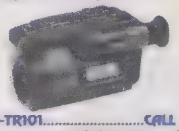
CCD-TR400	CALL
CCD-TR700	CALL
CCD-VX3	2649.99
CCD-FX420	499.99
CCD-FX520	509.99
CCD-FX620	599.99
CCD-FX430	589.99
CCD-FX530	669.99
CCD-FX630	689.99
CCD-SC5	569.99



CCD-TR101 ..... CALL
10X1 ZOOM, HI-8MM, IMAGE STABILIZER, PALMSIZE

CCD-TR700 ..... CALL
HI-8MM, COLOR VIEWFINDER, IMAGE STABILIZATION, RC TIME CODE

Panasonic

VHS-C

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PV-53	849.99
PV-54	CALL
PV-S63	949.99
PV-S64	CALL
PV-IQ204	519.99
PV-IQ304	544.99
PV-IQ404	619.99
PV-IQ504	679.99
PV-IQ604	829.99

PV-53 ..... $849.99
COLOR VIEWFINDER, IMAGE STABILIZER

FULL SIZE VHS

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PV-910	569.99
PV-760B	939.99
PV-S770	944.99
PV-362	599.99
PV-S372	799.99

PV-IQ504 ..... $679.99
COLOR LCD, V.F. HI FI STEREO, 1 LUX

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AG-455	1419.99
AG-195	CALL
AG-186	CALL
AG-3	2189.99
AG-PP800 3 Chip Supercam	CALL

VCRS

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AG-5700	CALL
AG-1970	1189.99
AG-1290	CALL
AG-1280	239.99
WJ-MX50	CALL
WJ-MX30	CALL
WJ-AVE7	CALL
WJ-AVE5	CALL
WJ-TTL5	CALL
AG-A96	CALL
CT-1383Y	239.99
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JVC

GR-AX75U
$689.99

GR-AX 25 ..... 479.99

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BR-S378U Super VHS VCR	CALL
TM-900 SU Monitor	439.99

SHARP

Canon

VIDEO Reader Service Card

Name _____ (please print)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone Number (with Area Code) _____

1. What size is your primary viewing TV?
   20"-25" A☐ 27"-25" B☐ 25"-27" C☐ 35"+ D☐
2. Approximately how many hours per day do you watch TV?
   0-2 E☐ 3-5 F☐ 6-10 G☐
3. How far in advance do you plan your TV viewing?
   1 hour H☐ 1 day I☐ 1 week J☐ No Planning K☐
4. Do you tape "series" programming (i.e. soap operas, mini-series)?
   Yes L☐ No M☐
5. Which sources do you use to plan TV viewing?
   Daily Newspaper N☐ Cable Guide O☐ Weekly Newspaper Insert P☐
   TV Guide Q☐ Other R☐
6. How many programs do you tape per week?
   1-5 S☐ 5-7 T☐ 7+ U☐
7. If programming your VCR was made easier would you record additional shows?
   Yes V☐ No W☐
8. Are you currently a subscriber to VIDEO? Yes X☐ No Y☐

Please circle product numbers to receive desired information

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45
46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75
76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105
106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120
121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135
136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150
151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165
166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180
181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	191	192	193	194	195

Allow 6-8 weeks for delivery. Card expires 12/19/94. RS994

VIDEO Reader Service Card

Name _____ (please print)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone Number (with Area Code) _____

1. What size is your primary viewing TV?
   20"-25" A☐ 27"-25" B☐ 25"-27" C☐ 35"+ D☐
2. Approximately how many hours per day do you watch TV?
   0-2 E☐ 3-5 F☐ 6-10 G☐
3. How far in advance do you plan your TV viewing?
   1 hour H☐ 1 day I☐ 1 week J☐ No Planning K☐
4. Do you tape "series" programming (i.e. soap operas, mini-series)?
   Yes L☐ No M☐
5. Which sources do you use to plan TV viewing?
   Daily Newspaper N☐ Cable Guide O☐ Weekly Newspaper Insert P☐
   TV Guide Q☐ Other R☐
6. How many programs do you tape per week?
   1-5 S☐ 5-7 T☐ 7+ U☐
7. If programming your VCR was made easier would you record additional shows?
   Yes V☐ No W☐
8. Are you currently a subscriber to VIDEO? Yes X☐ No Y☐

Please circle product numbers to receive desired information

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45
46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75
76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105
106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120
121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135
136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150
151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165
166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180
181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	191	192	193	194	195

Allow 6-8 weeks for delivery. Card expires 12/19/94. RS994

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STEADY SHOT
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E700 8MM-12X1 ZOOM-OPTICAL STAB	CALL
E [illegible]	CALL
E [illegible]	CALL
E [illegible]	NEW
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A [illegible] DIGITAL HI8 [illegible]	CALL

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AG-[illegible]	CALL
AG-[illegible]	[illegible]
AG-[illegible]	[illegible]
WV-[illegible]	$[illegible]
WV-[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	CALL
[illegible]	[illegible]
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CCD-TR70	649.99
CCD-TR82	CALL
CCD-TR91	779.99
CCD-TR101	CALL
CCD-TR500	1049.99
CCD-TR400	CALL
CCD-TR700	CALL
CCD-VX3	2649.99
CCD-FX420	499.99
CCD-FX520	509.99
CCD-FX620	599.99
CCD-FX430	589.99
CCD-FX530	669.99
CCD-FX630	689.99
CCD-SC5	569.99

CCD-TR101 ..... CALL
10X1 ZOOM, HI-8MM, IMAGE STABILIZER, PALMSIZE

CCD-TR700 ..... CALL
HI-8MM, COLOR VIEWFINDER, IMAGE STABILIZATION, RC TIME CODE

Panasonic

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PV-54	CALL
PV-S63	949.99
PV-S64	CALL
PV-IQ204	519.99
PV-IQ304	544.99
PV-IQ404	619.99
PV-IQ504	679.99
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PV-760B	939.99
PV-S770	944.99
PV-362	599.99
PV-S372	799.99

PV-53 ..... $849.99
COLOR VIEWFINDER, IMAGE STABILIZER

PV-IQ504 ..... $679.99
COLOR LCD, V.F. HI FI STEREO, 1 LUX

AG-460	CALL
AG-455	1419.99
AG-195	CALL
AG-186	CALL
AG-3	2189.99
AG-PP800 3 Chip Supercam	CALL

VCRS

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AG-5700	CALL
AG-1970	1189.99
AG-1290	CALL
AG-1280	239.99
WJ-MX50	CALL
WJ-MX30	CALL
WJ-AVE7	CALL
WJ-AVE5	CALL
WJ-TTL5	CALL
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CT-1383Y	239.99
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GR-AX 30	CALL
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GR-AX 55	539.99
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BR-S378U Super VHS VCR	CALL
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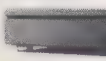

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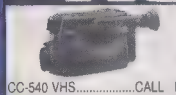

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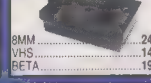

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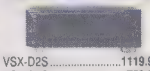

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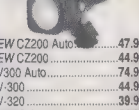

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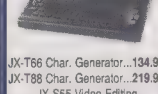

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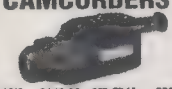

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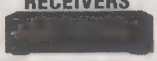

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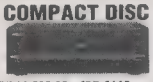

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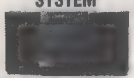

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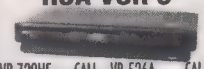

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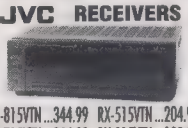

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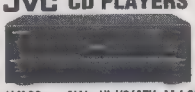

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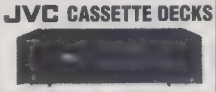

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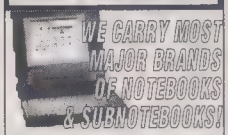

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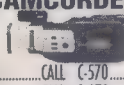

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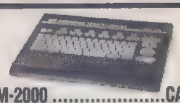

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LET'S GET SMALL

continued from page 49

This would be a good setup if your couch is on the back wall—a poor but often necessary location in a cubicle. You won't get much slap echo off the back wall if your head is right there, which is good, though you can count on heavy, humpy bass response. For quality versus quantity in the bass, an equalizer might be your only choice.

PADDED CELL

Besides a rug or carpeting, which is always a good idea, acoustic treatment can be challenging. Following THX logic, ceiling reflections harm imaging and timbre and create a need for controlled-directivity speakers or ceiling treatment. Other experts (they just don't agree) say the ceiling is far enough away to be insignificant, and sidewall reflections matter most. Suspended ceilings are more forgiving than hard, reflective ones.

Moving or aiming your side speakers inward can reduce troublesome sidewall reflections, but acoustic treatment may be necessary. Heavy drapes are helpful over windows—or even walls. You may prefer some kind of decorative wall hanging to professional acoustic panels. If you plaster up wedgy hunks of foam, guests will think you an insufferable geek.

More attractive, sculpturesque treatments are available from Tectum, Systems Development Group, RPG Diffusor, RoomTunes, Illbruck (Sonex) and Acoustic Sciences, but the better these products look, the more they tend to cost. If you don't *mind* form getting whipped by function, you can achieve similar ends with household treatments—a comforter hung on the wall, for instance—for less money. (Better to be a geek with laserdisc money.) Other household furnishings can be beneficial; stocked bookcases and even plants can help diffuse sound.

Speaking of bookcases, despite the name, bookshelf speakers are rarely designed to actually sound good in a bookshelf or mounted to a wall (some of RDL Acoustics' products are a notable exception). Speakers in the surround role can get away with it because Pro-Logic rolls off bass below 100 Hz and treble above seven kilohertz in the surround channel. Not so with the front speakers; I recommend speaker stands, because they offer great flexibility in placement.

Furniture and electronics have just recently begun to coexist peacefully, and several equipment manufacturers have teamed up with furniture makers to further the integration of home and home theater. There's no doubt in my mind that you could find a beautiful entertainment center for your system, even for a small room. However, you have to decide what's important to you. A theme of this guide has been experimentation, and prefab furniture generally allows little flexibility, particularly in speaker placement.

Another theme behind this guide has been the profound effect environment has on sound. I won't burst anyone's home-furnishing bubble, but I will issue this caveat: If you let some salesperson convince you to buy an outboard digital-to-analog converter for a subtle sonic improvement, only to place your speakers inside hardwood cabinets near the floor, you might just get a visit from the horned guy after all. And you'd deserve it. ■

TECH TIPS

Vacation titles

For a cheap, easy way to add titles to your vacation tapes, pick up the free brochures that are always available at national parks and other points of interest. Put your camcorder on a tripod and use the macro setting to capture titles and pictures.

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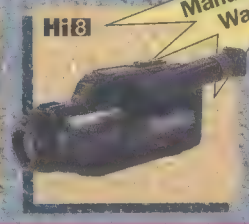

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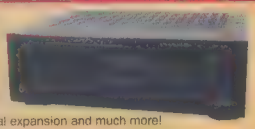

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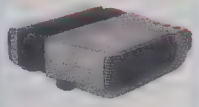

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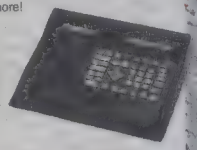

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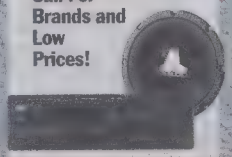

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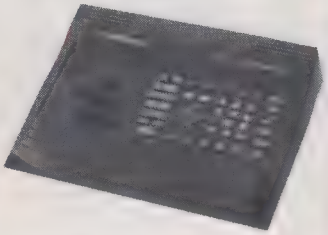

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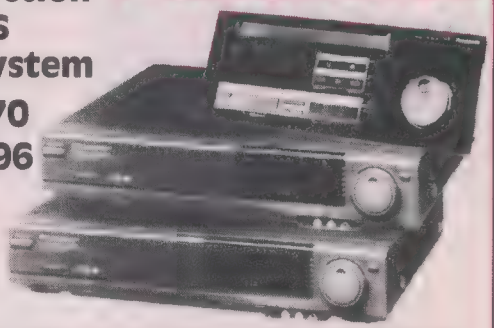

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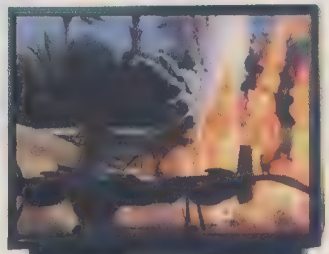

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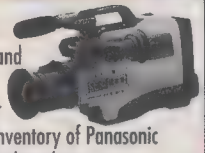

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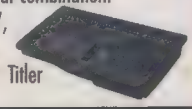

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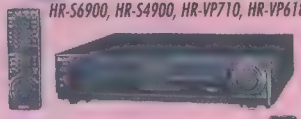

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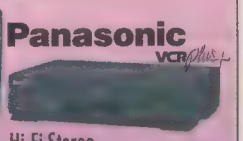

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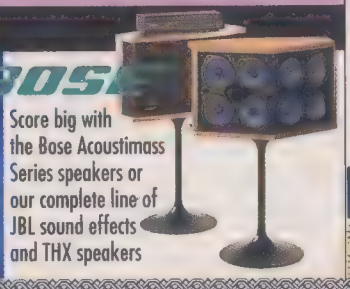

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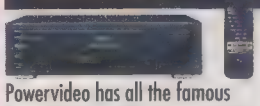

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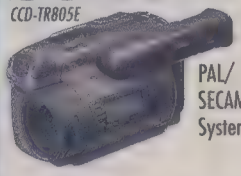

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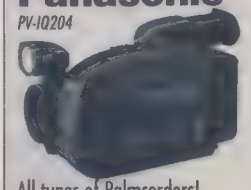

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ISSUE	RESERVE	MAT.
November 1994	9/1/94	9/8/94
December 1994	9/29/94	10/6/94
January 1995	11/3/94	11/10/94
February 1995	11/23/94	12/1/94

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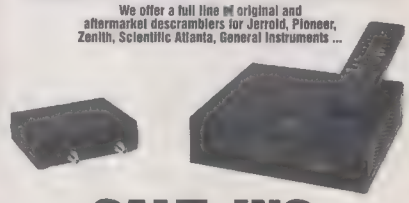

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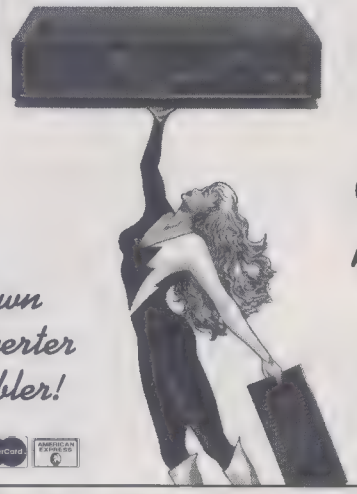

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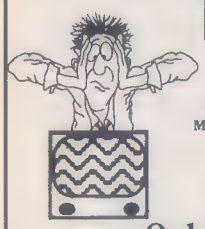

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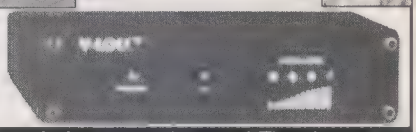

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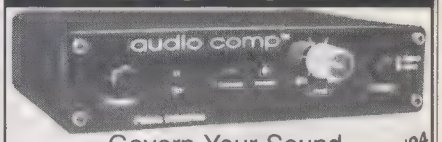

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HANDS-ON

continued from page 22

251LRs handle *plenty* of power.

How do Atlantic's ideas add up sonically? Beautifully. Technical editor Lancelot Braithwaite and I were both very impressed by the sonic coherence of the system when we played Dolby Stereo movie soundtracks. As with the best THX systems, it doesn't sound like a bunch of speakers—instead, sounds just seem to hang there in space. (Atlantic Technology founder Peter Tribeman calls this effect an "acoustic bubble.") And rolling off the highs in the center speaker takes away the fatiguing edge that makes many home theater systems unpopular with non-enthusiasts.

The stereo music sound was also terrific. We compared the 251LR speakers with several competing models, and even with Mirage's $600 M490, which we use as a modest reference speaker. We liked the 251LR best on every piece of music we tried, save one: Jongen's *Symphonie Concertante*, a symphony with organ that actually sounded best on RA Labs' $179 Mini Reference.

I also brought the 251LRs home for a comparison with NHT's SuperZeros, which scored big in our recent budget speaker shootout ("High-End Sound For A Song," July). I liked the SuperZero Better for music overall—it's an *amazing* little speaker—but I liked the Atlantic system better for movies. The coherence of the 250 system gives an almost magical effect to movie soundtracks that I haven't found with any other system in this price range. And the Atlantic system better handles the 105-decibel peaks of Dolby reference level.

The Atlantic Technology 250 system is one of the safest recommendations I can make in the crowded class of $1,000 to $1,500 home theater speaker systems. It combines a musical sound on stereo recordings with a real "you are there" presence on movie soundtracks. And that's pretty much everything you can ask for. ■

TECH TIP

Dews and don'ts

On many Sony camcorders, the dew warning may continue to keep the equipment shut down long after the problem has "evaporated." The battery must be removed and re-attached to reset the system. James R.C. Adams, North Manchester, Indiana

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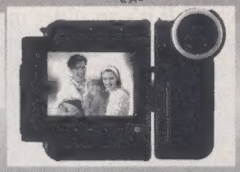

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BY MICHELLE WEST

Health care for your VCR

There were no VCRs when Alon Walk joined his parents' repair business, L.J.W. Electronics in north Toronto, in 1974. But there were TVs and when VCRs arrived, he was ready. Walk's repaired his way through every generation of deck—and camcorder and laserdisc player and stereo receiver—to come along since. Now he's known as the man to take your equipment to if there's a problem, as I've been doing for years. As a top video repairman, he's a gold mine of information about the deepest recesses of our video gear. I talked with him recently about some of the things that go wrong with VCRs and camcorders. Here's his advice about the problems he most frequently encounters:

• The biggest mistake you can make with your camcorder is also one of the easiest to make: Leaving a tape in the loaded position for long periods of time. Don't do it. Changes in heat or humidity levels can cause the tape to stick to the recording heads, so much so that you may have to replace the heads.

• Suppose your recording heads have seen better days and really do need to be replaced—is it better to buy a new machine or replace the old heads? The answer, says Walk, depends on how much you like your VCR. Does it do everything you want? If it's an older machine, it's probably sturdier than less costly new models, and may keep on ticking for years after a head replacement and a professional cleaning. On the other hand, says Walk, newer models weigh less and have technological improvements not available a few years ago. They tend to have more features per dollar, they use power more efficiently, and they're simpler to operate.

• Suppose there's a tape stuck in your VCR? Unless you're comfortable with removing the top and checking the tape path, this is one time you really need to pop into a repair shop, because you'll find it impossible to know why the tape jammed. Did a problem with the tape cause the machine to go, or did the machine go and take the tape with it? If the stuck tape is a rental, some video stores will pay for the cost of removing it. If the tape is of a highly...er...personal nature, and you're embarrassed about being seen with your pants down, have a friend drop off the machine. The repair people won't know who's been caught on the tape, although they may have a good laugh anyway.

• Pay attention when loading a tape. As consumers over the years demanded less costly VCRs and camcorders with more features, something had to give. Often it was the ruggedness of construction. Newer decks, says Walk, have more plastic parts than veteran machines. Before you load a tape, tighten it first by sticking your finger, or a nickel, in the hub and pulling the tape taut. And load it gently—today's plastic gears are less forgiving than the belt drives on older VCRs. Walk sees more broken gear teeth than any other type of damage. And some camcorder gears cannot be replaced individually—you'll have to replace a whole system assembly just because of one or two broken teeth.

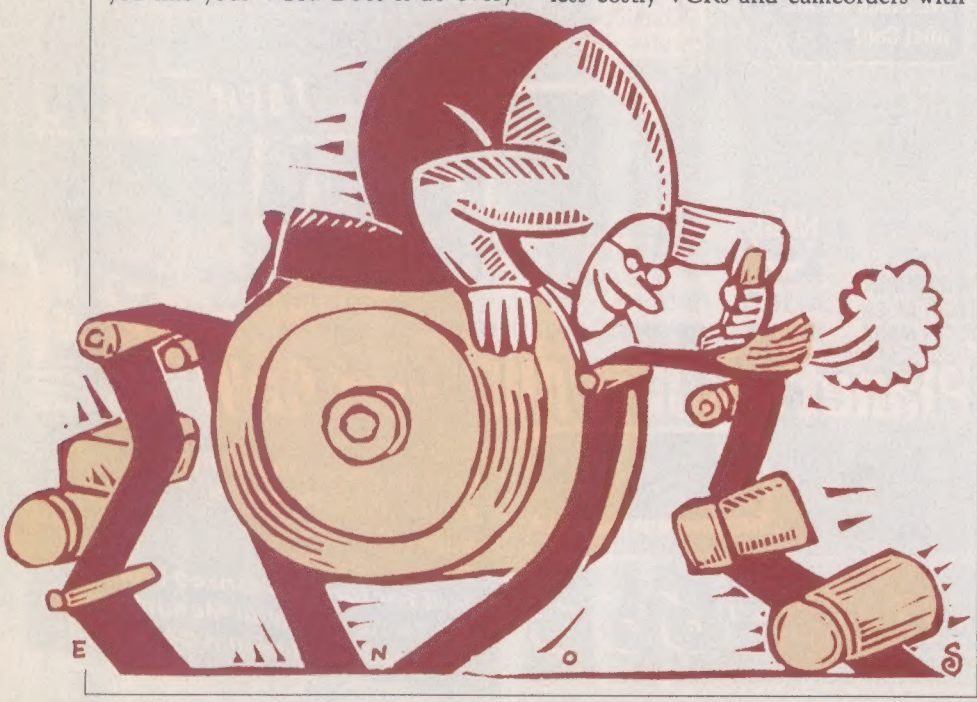
• Tired of watching favorite movies through a haze? Your recording heads may need a good cleaning. But be careful. The most important thing about using commercial head cleaners is to follow the instructions. If you're using a dry cleaner that recommends 10 seconds of cleaning, that's what you should do. More is not better. You'll just sandpaper your heads down. If you use a cleaner twice and still have problems, take the machine in for a professional cleaning.

• Speaking of cleaners, what type's best: wet or dry? Both are fine, says Walk, as long as you get one that has a long piece of cleaning material that is never rewound or reused. A cleaner that is reused will deposit more dirt onto the heads than it removes after the first use. If you use a wet cleaner, don't use the machine for at least 10 minutes after you're finished to make sure all the parts are dry. Otherwise tape can stick inside.

• If you've wondered about using bulk erasers, there's no need to worry. Walk says he's never seen any problems caused by their use.

• If you tape Letterman and O'Brien every single night, or just two hours of soaps every afternoon, always use the SP speed. This will cause the tape you're using to wear evenly. Never use just one small section of a tape over and over.

• Try to avoid using reverse scan too much. Using it, says Walk, is like driving your car forward at 10 miles per hour and backward at 50 mph at the same time. Excessive use causes more wear and tear on the heads and the tapes because it increases tape tension. Work it out, through a judicious use of rewind and fast forward, so that most of your scanning is done in a forward direction. ■



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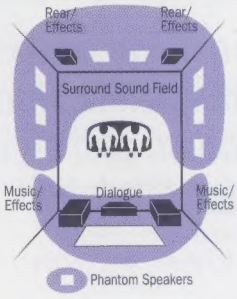

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